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VÉRA;

OR,

THE RUSSIAN PRINCESS AND THE ENGLISH EARL.

NEW YORK:
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1871.

Price 40 Cents.

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VÉRA;

OR,

THE RUSSIAN PRINCESS AND THE ENGLISH EARL.

"Novelists pluck this event here, and that fortune there, and tie them rashly to their figures. . . . Great is the poverty of their inventions. '*She was beautiful, and he fell in love*,—these are the main-springs; new names, but no new qualities in men or women."—EMERSON.

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VÉRA.

PART I.

IN WHICH THE WHEEL BEGINS TO TURN.

View mortal man, none ever will you find,
If the gods force him, that can shun his fate.
Œdipus at Colonus.—POTTER'S *Translation.*

CHAPTER I.

BEGINNING AT THE BEGINNING.

Two young men had been standing together in the morning-room of a house in Cadogan Place. The men were half-brothers, the day was the 7th of February, 1854, and the hour was 4 P. M.; and there, when the dialogue ceased, which it did rather abruptly, and when the door had closed on the last and younger of the speakers, the elder, Colonel Henry St. John, was left alone, smoking in front of the fire.

The time and the place of this conversation having been given, it only remains for me to add that the subject of it had been debt—debts to the amount of £780, incurred by Philip St. John, and which he was incapable of paying on this or any future day: moreover (and this complicated the affair not a little), he was at this moment, as an ensign in the Grenadier Guards, under immediate orders to leave England for the seat of war in the East.

I might enlarge in this place on his extravagance, and on the curious items which had, in a few months, swelled to such a total; but I remember that when I used to tell stories to a bright-eyed audience in the nursery, that audience always cried out, "Begin at the very beginning;" and thus it may be as well in telling a story for children of larger growth to bear this hint in mind, and so perhaps interest the reader more genuinely in the fortunes of my hero.

To begin then "at the beginning."

His father, the late Colonel the Honorable John St. John, was twice married. His first wife brought him a son within a year of their marriage, and then, after some years of bad health, died, leaving her boy Henry, the hero of this book, to the tender mercies of servants, and of a widower of whom the world prophesied that he would not be long in consoling himself. But if, by this expression, a second marriage was intended, the world for once was wrong. The Honorable John St. John enjoyed his liberty for seven years, and he might perhaps have continued to do so for seven years more, had not ruin overtaken him, and rendered it incumbent on him to look out for a wife with money. He found one —a Miss Heathcote, a very rich, foolish, and ill-advised heiress, who at twenty-

one years of age bestowed herself and her fortune on the ex-M.P. for North ——shire. Not only was the Honorable John at that moment bankrupt, but there had been some unfortunate circumstances connected with the fact, and with his career, which had made his own county what is vulgarly called "too hot" for him, and which had also had the effect of making his eldest brother's house as much too cold for him. In fact, Lord Kendal had simply refused to see his brother John again.

The story had been a bad one, albeit a common enough, or a likely enough one. It was that of a rich young widow to whom he had paid great attentions. Mrs. Lindley was his junior, and still very attractive; yet though her jointure was large she was not the less ruled by the two passions which finally brought about her undoing, she wished to increase her worldly goods by speculation, and she wished to obtain, and if needs be buy, a connection with the peerage. What sort of a step-father the Honorable John St. John might make to her two boys was a minor consideration, I fear, with her; but at all events she paid dearly for any hopes she had been led to entertain by him. Her money melted away in his larger speculations, her son's fortune was damaged, the big oaks and elms of his park had to be cut down, and, eight months later, when she had gone to Bath to retrench, she had the pleasure of reading in the *Times* John St. John's marriage to the Miss Heathcote aforesaid. How that Miss Heathcote came to be so much left to herself as to marry a man who had lost a fortune, a character, a seat in Parliament, and the colonelcy of a yeomanry regiment, all within a year of making her acquaintance, I know not; only Miss Heathcote was young, and silly, and as obstinate as only a very silly woman can be—and so, in Paris, at the chapel of the British Embassy, in May, 1835, she embarked in matrimony with this hero. With the details of their wedded life, not always edifying, I will not weary the reader: suffice it to say that they were not such as to induce Lord Kendal to alter his opinion of his brother's conduct, and that two children were born to this couple—a daughter, born at Tours, Rue de la Scellerie, and christened Anne, and a son, also born at Tours, who received the name of Philip Heathcote.

But how had it fared in the mean time, through childhood, boyhood, and youth, with Henry St. John, the son by the first marriage? It had fared rather hardly as a child, and after that much less ill than might have been expected, thanks to the kindness of Lord Kendal, who, taking a fancy to the boy, had sent him to school as soon as was possible after his mother's death. That school answered well, and Lord Kendal of course paid for it; but, when Master St. John had outgrown the care of the very excellent lady in whose house he lived for three years, a painful interregnum then occurred in his education. It was mainly spent in France, and there it was that the young gentleman acquired that proficiency in foreign tongues which distinguished him in later life; but there he might also have learned many other and less desirable things, both from his father and from his father's companions, had not Lord Kendal again interfered, and again bought the right to superintend the training of the lad. Miss Heathcote's appearance on the scene about that time had given the signal, it is true, for at least a temporary reformation in his home, but Lord Kendal still forbade his brother the house, and the father and the step-mother, in spite of that condition, were quite ready to hand over to the peer the son, who was at least the presumptive heir to his title and to the estates.

Lord Kendal was a bachelor, a bookworm, and a recluse of so inveterate a kind, that he had built up the ground-floor windows of one side of the house lest he should be overlooked by the gardener's or the baker's boys; and his

life was as solitary as it was frugal. He kept a secretary, a stout cob, and a breed of mastiffs, for which Hurst Royal had long been famous: he wore a velvet cap and smoked incessantly, and he lived in the county, not because he knew the pig from the cow, or a mangold-wurzel from a hyacinth, but because he liked pure air, large rooms, quiet by night, and learned leisure by day. In politics he defined himself a Tory, and he was a Churchman in theory, albeit not one in practice, as he did not attend the services of the Church, having taken umbrage in early life at the bad logic of the parson, the coughing of the children, and the southernwood nosegays of the old women. Many years ago, and when his brother John had been first returned for the county, he had taken some interest in politics, but that had been only ephemeral—the conduct of John St. John had been too discreditable, the electors had been found to be venal, and the agents to have faults more serious than were those of the curates and of the charity children. He gave largely to local charities, but his temper was not the less of the kind euphuistically called difficult—namely, too difficult for its owner to manage, and very difficult for his neighbors always to steer clear of.

The secret of Lord Kendal's celibacy was a quarrel with the only woman he had ever loved. He had been wrong in it, but he had (and perhaps for that very reason) kept it up with a firmness worthy of a better cause; and thus, when he had shut the door some years later in his brother's face, his interests and sympathies, but for the existence of Master Henry, would have begun and ended in his library.

The recluse's heart was thus sleeping, when, at the age of fourteen, the boy came to stir it, and to make the old house, the stables, the park, the mere, and the preserves, ring to young voices and young steps. Lord Kendal was very indulgent to him. He would lay aside his great *opus*, "The Lives of Great Men," a sort of modern Plutarch, which he was preparing, to look at the contents of Henry's game-bag, and he even began to take an intelligent interest in ferrets, kingfishers and stag-beetles, all parts of the animal creation which had never before been properly brought under his notice. He grew thus to experience some of the cares and pleasures of fatherhood, and more of its pleasures than of its cares, for the boy was handsome, docile, truthful, and clever. There is a theory that gout and madness often skip over one generation to reappear in the next, and in that same way, while passing over the Honorable John, of impecunious memory, there really did seem to have descended to his son the honor, the industry, and the self-control, of the first, the lawyer Earl of Kendal.

Harrow and Christ Church followed each other for Henry, and then Lord Kendal bought a commission for his nephew, and sent into the Scots Fusileer Guards as fine a young fellow as ever wore her Majesty's uniform—a very good-looking one, I may also add. A good deal above the middle height, well-knit and well-proportioned, he looked very handsome in his uniform, and from under the fringe of his bearskin you saw dark-blue eyes, regular features, and a very pleasant mouth. His hair was so dark that it might almost have passed for black, but that on the cheek and above the mouth it had rich warm tints of brown. His voice, in speaking, was low and modulated, and he was naturally rather silent, though, perhaps, the least shy man in London. He explained this by saying that he had had to conquer all shyness as a lad. Much of his intercourse with his uncle had cost him an effort at first; and no wonder, since, till you had gained, and knew that you had gained, his regard, Lord Kendal was indeed a very awe-inspiring man. Then much of Henry's intercourse, after he grew up, with both father and step-

mother, had entailed efforts of another description, and, to a youth so schooled in the family, society presented no great difficulties. But he had naturally a good deal of *à plomb*, and very little vanity. He meant to be a good soldier, and he meant to command his regiment some day, and on another, a very distant day, to be the third Earl of Kendal, and to take his seat in the House of Lords, the representation of his county being shut, as well he knew, to his father's son forever. In the mean time, he would take his place in the world. Alas! there was many a steep hill to be climbed ere that future of ease and honor was won, for which he fancied that he had only to work and wait.

CHAPTER II.

OF FAMILY MATTERS.

Nine times out of ten it is over the Bridge of Sighs that we pass the narrow gulf from youth to manhood. —LORD LYTTON.

DEATH, which solves all riddles for the man whom it overtakes, is very often apt to leave, however, a new set of them for the solution of the survivors, and when death at last cut short the career of the Honorable John St. John, it was found that he had left his brother and his eldest son joint-executors and joint-guardians to his two younger children. A family council was held at Hurst Royal upon this matter, and the deliberations there were both perplexing and perplexed.

John St. John's home had been fixed for the last two years at Brighton. His daughter Annie was twelve years of age, his son Philip was eleven, and their mother, who was in indifferent health, had found at Brighton a society eminently to her mind. Perhaps *mind* is a strong word to apply to the mental or psychical processes of Albinia St. John, so I will rather substitute for it that of *tastes*, and say that her tastes lay in preachers, milliners, doctors, and toadies. The toadies she preferred to every thing else, and she valued the clergymen, doctors, and milliners, exactly in the ratio in which they might add toadyism to their other virtues and qualifications. In London, an Honorable, more or less, before one's name, counts for nothing, but in Brighton it matters a great deal, and so, when Mrs. St. John was left a widow, she proposed to herself to make her home by those shallow waters, and on that glaring promenade.

After the funeral, Lord Kendal brought himself to see his sister-in-law for the first time. It was about seven weeks after the solemnity that he took his courage in his two hands, and, in company with his nephew, went down to Brighton, where Mrs. St. John was inexpressibly comic in her preparations for his advent.

She had an instinctive awe of the peer who was the head of the house, and who had kept her worthy husband at a distance ever since she had the benefit of his acquaintance, but she had also an instinctive preference for male society, so she armed herself for this meeting with a battery of charms, and then played them off on her deceased husband's brother with the greatest vivacity. The best of it was, that Lord Kendal, being a man of very dry humor, entered immensely into the joke. He saw through all the smiles and tears, but he admired her blue eyes, her almond-shaped nails, her long cap-strings, and her still very pretty figure, with all the alacrity that was expected of him. Henry St. John winced the while under the spectacle, and congratulated himself that the peer did not see much of his step-mother, since the first evening had been passed in a mingled parade of sorrow and elegance that was very trying. On the second, Mrs. St. John's conversation became more confidential and secular, though she selected, as a topic, less the many and varied ex-

periences of her married life, than her triumphs as a young lady. Lord Kendal again listened with an air of conviction, and wore a face of amused commiseration over the early and violent deaths of several of her victims, smiling at times with the most grimly-assenting smiles. From these subjects she passed on to that of climate. "No one could believe how much one climate affected her spirits, or how much another tried her nerves." Of the climate of Brighton she had nothing but good to say, "though it was true that her poor dear husband had" (as the French express it) "permitted himself to die of it." "You ought to be very grateful to it, madam," observed Lord Kendal, making her a grave bow, and she, not perceiving the satire in the speech, said that she really was so, and that she hoped to remain where she was. His lordship then, with a dry preliminary *hem!* plunged into the subject of house-rent, and then disclosed to her, rather abruptly, the results of his meditations, and of a committee of ways and means held that morning with Henry St. John and their lawyer. He began by offering a very handsome subsidy for her own wants, and by promising a still better allowance for the education of his brother's children, irrespective of the allowance which he habitually made to Captain St. John. Then came the question of establishments. It seemed that two could hardly be kept up even on the means he was inclined to place at their disposal, so the house in Brighton must be let—perhaps, ultimately sold—and the whole party must agree to keep house together in London, and Philip must be sent to school.

Mrs. St. John's dismay when she heard of this plan was not less genuine than had been that of her step-son when it was first disclosed to him. And yet twelve hours of reflection, while they showed him that its details in practice would be even more unpleasant than was its aspect in theory, had also shown him that it was the only just and feasible arrangement. Mrs. St. John had not been left any share in the guardianship of her two children; one of the two guardians must, therefore, undertake that duty, and turn to some profitable account the money allowed by Lord Kendal for their education. They must all keep house together—there was no help for it. Annie was a nice child, and Philip might not have been less so, had not his mother done her best to spoil what she now called "the last pledge of her dear husband's affection." He was now to go to school, Lord Kendal said, and, though Mrs. St. John consented, she was not very likely, if left to herself, to carry the terrible threat into execution. To London they were to go, Lord Kendal also said, and to London, accordingly, they went; and then Philip really was sent to Marlborough, and a daily governess and masters were got for his sister.

Their home was a house in the upper end of Cadogan Place. There Henry St. John had his two rooms, and there, at the age of seven-and-twenty, he established himself, father of a fine family, as he said, besides being advisor, tutor, and major-domo to Mrs. St. John.

I know that she disliked the change, and I do not think that she liked her step-son. For some weeks she had held forth to all her acquaintances in Brighton about these plans; how Lord Kendal had proposed this, and Lord Kendal had arranged that, and so on; with "Lord Kendal" at every second word, and *ad nauseam.* That had been very fine in its way, but the reality had by no means proved as delectable, and Henry St. John, on close acquaintance, turned out to be most aggravatingly like his uncle; not like the Lord Kendal whom she was apt to harangue about, but like the one who did his duty, and expected other people to do theirs; who gave pounds unasked for, and demanded a strict account of pence, who preferred deeds to words, who had a dry way of instantly clearing the argu-

ment of all sophisms, paradoxes, and cobwebs, and of expecting the plainest of "*becauses*" to follow on the shortest of "*whys?*"

Annie St. John loved her half-brother, and she was, perhaps, the only person in the house who did. She was not afraid of him, she perched on the arm of his chair, played tidy little tunes to him of an evening, made his breakfast, smoothed out his newspapers, and reduced the rooms to something like order, for his comfort. Annie was not pretty, but she was lively and truthful, and Mrs. St. John felt her to be rather on the enemy's side whenever, by some gross unpunctuality in appointments or payments, she was made uneasy under her step-son's eyes. Really she tried his patience. Her obstinate coldness when they were alone, her smooth-spokenness when strangers were present, her foolish flutters in men's society, her equally foolish terrors in the streets, her untidiness and extravagance, her perpetual wrangles with her servants, her whims about her health and victuals, her palpable neglect of her daughter—all these were features which might well have worn out the patience of an older or wiser man. But Henry St. John was, as he briefly expressed it, "in for the thing," and he would stick to it, keeping his temper in the best way he could, and removing his little sister as far as he could from the effects of her mother's folly. He walked with her often, and read for her; and then Lord Kendal gave her horses, and they rode together, and as Annie gradually shot up into a tall, graceful girl, her love and gratitude made the home-life less trying. At thirty-two years of age Captain, now Colonel, St. John, was quite a family man. People admired him, and the London mammas who had long wondered why he did not marry, settled that he would not do so now until he had seen his sister established.

Seven or eight years ago Henry St. John had, as it happened, wished to marry, and his choice had then fallen on a girl in his own county. But there the legends of his father's misconduct had pursued him. Lord Kendal had disapproved of the match, the young lady's family had been less than cordial, and finally the fair one had been false, so that the affair had ended in disappointment and pain. He did not easily get over it. He was incapable of replacing the fickle idol, or of beginning again at London routs and balls all the preludes and proems of the tender passion, and before long the death of his father had thrown on his shoulders a new burden of cares. And it is the way of this wicked world that as one trouble vanishes another comes.

Henry St. John going into society in 1853–'54, with his sister, was a quite heart-whole man, and Annie's social prospects were good, but then here was Philip grown up, and already on his "way through the world," if one might judge by the way that he made through his allowance.

Lord Kendal had again been paymaster in this case, and had bought a commission for the youngster in the Grenadier Guards, when, wonderful to relate, he had got through his examination. He was now launched in London life, beautiful in his own eyes, and in those of Mrs. St. John. He resembled his mother. He had her fair hair, and good blue eyes, and withal such a pretty pink-and-white complexion, that he would have made in that respect a prettier young lady than did poor Annie, who had inherited the olive cheek of the late Honorable John. The good looks were spoilt, however, by a rather peevish expression, and by an extreme of self-consciousness that would have been fatal to Narcissus. And a more extravagant boy never lived. The grief of his life—its secret grief surely, for one cannot fancy even Mrs. St. John silly enough to have been its confidante—was that he was number two in the family, and that no amount of wish-

ing would make him heir to an earldom, or make sure that through life "the pigeons would fly" (as the Germans say) "ready roast into his mouth." That was certain; but he seemed less convinced of the truth of what might be called its minor proposition, viz., that he ought not to buy what he could not pay for, or bet sovereigns when he had but sixpences to spend. Philip had already made many attempts to solve the problem of cutting the coat wider than the cloth, and one of the most remarkable of these experiments had been made at Marlborough College when a boy of fourteen. He bought a pony. Where he got it, or what he paid for it, is not known to history; but an approximation can be made as to what it "stood him in," from the fact that he had an allowance of two shillings a week of pocket-money. Part of this sum he devoted to the pony's keep, and to the hire of the shed in which the animal was hidden. Whether a prolonged diet of squibs and toffy disagreed with it there, or whether, as is but too probable, its master forgot to feed it, I cannot say, but one day the poor starved brute with ribs protruding, with knees tottering, and with a coat two inches long, was produced before the angry eyes of Dr. Colenso, who ordered the pony to be shot, and the boy to be flogged.

This had unfortunately not been Philip's last adventure in horse-flesh, and so it happened that on the eve of his departure for the Crimea, the sum of £780 was wanted to pay his lawful debts.

The debts had formed the subject of that conversation between the two brothers which is mentioned on the first page of this book. The money was to be forthcoming, the elder brother said, the people who advanced it being Colonel St. John, and Colonel Alfred Newbold, a brother officer of his own, who knew something of the family affairs, and who had just claimed for himself a right to know them.

He had just engaged himself to Annie St. John, and had given her the assurance of his love before taking a long and enforced leave of her, and of his own country.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEPARTURE.

> Who could guess
> If evermore should meet those mutual eyes?
>
> *Childe Harold.*

The first week of February was already gone, and by its last days Miss St. John's two brothers and her betrothed would all have sailed. Their very hours seemed numbered.

Now as I recall those February days, all their farewells, all the steps that then left thresholds they were never again to cross, all the ashy faces, and all the unspeakable pangs of parting suffered that month through the length and breadth of Britain, my eyes, even at this distance of years, grow dim; the pain of it all seems too fresh: so that I can hardly dwell on it.

At 4 A. M. on the morning of Wednesday the 22d of February, when, by lamplight and to the sound of their band, the Grenadier Guards poured out of St. George's Barracks, Philip St. John carried one of their colors. His mother, prostrate on her face in her chamber, and praying to God through all that gray and cheerless dawning, was not the less to be pitied, or the less a mother, because she happened to be also an unutterably foolish woman. Her darling was gone from her: when and how would he return?

For Annie the worst was yet to come, for in that embarkation of the household troops the Grenadiers had had the *pas*. At 6 A. M. their train had moved out of the Waterloo Bridge station, and before the brief February day had closed, the three great steamers had received their precious freights, and then in order (first the *Manilla*, then the *Ripon*, and, two

hours later, the *Orinoco*) they stood out into the Southampton Water, and with the next morning's tide they were gone.

But the Scots Fusileer Guards were still in London, and to remain till the following Tuesday. Their last week was full of business and bustle. An inspection at the Wellington Barracks, where a princely mother and sister came to see a princely soldier under arms, and a dinner given to the same Prince by the members of White's, where the chairman also was a prince in lineage, and in personal beauty, if not absolutely one by title—these, and many other engagements, filled up Colonel St. John and Colonel Newbold's last days in London.

"Apply to Lord Kendal in your first difficulty, and do not wait for a second. God bless you, dearest, take care of yourself and write to me, like a good girl," were her brother's last words to Annie St. John. What her lover's were she might not choose that I should repeat, or that you should hear; but they were said on the stairs, and after those words the two men were gone. It was 11 P. M., and when the girl ran up to her room, she saw by the lamplight that a shower of snow was falling, and had already covered with a white sheet the steps and the threshold where their feet had last stood.

Was this a good augury or a bad?

My readers may remember something of the programme of the 27th of February, when the Queen, surrounded by her children, saw the Scots Fusileer Guards drawn up before the great entrance of Buckingham Palace. All of Westminster that was not already awake and afoot at that hour, must have been startled by the volleys of cheers with which she was greeted, and which she was content on that day to share with her cousin, as also by the loud braying of the band, and by the huzzas of the populace, as the regiment made its way through the Mall, and by Trafalgar Square, to the Strand and the Bridge. On the Surrey side fresh crowds awaited it, with fresh welcomes, fresh sobs, and fresh cheers. Then the trains moved away: at one the troops reached Portsmouth, where the *Simoom* was waiting for them, and on the 1st of March, Colonel St. John and Colonel Newbold looked their last on England.

With Colonel Newbold, a frank and simple-hearted man, it was a desperate case of "the girl he left behind him," and he was very low for the first few hours. His companion was, perhaps, more to be pitied, for he saw how great a part of Annie St. John's thoughts her future husband already filled, and if he was himself really very much missed by any one, it was only by the recluse at Hurst Royal.

CHAPTER IV.

OF OUR MOTHER MOSCOW, AND FAMILY MATTERS THERE.

> A daughter of the gods, divinely tall,
> And most divinely fair.
>
> TENNYSON.

> Il fu che truis uns Chevaliers,
> Jouenes, biaus, cointes, fors et fiers.
>
> OLD FRENCH ROMANCE—*D'un Chevaliers qui amoit une Dame.*

IN the garden-court of an old house in the Tverskoï Street in Moscow, a boy and a girl had been standing together for some time on an evening of the early summer of 1854. Dinner was over, and a *réunion* that was to take place that evening in Prince and Princess Michael Zamiàtine's room had not yet begun. The girl was their only child, Princess Véra; the youth was their godson, cousin, and ward, the young Count Alexis Dimitrivitch Zotoff. They were occupied with each other and with a large brass field-piece, which, with its green painted carriage and caissons, occupied the centre of the terrace, and the servants, whose heads appeared from time to time at doors and windows, were occupied with the gun and with the young couple; and they, at least, deserved at-

tention. Véra Zamiàtine, dressed in white, stood holding together with one hand a mass of fleecy-looking, white Archangel knitting, which her companion had thrown over her as they came out, and with the other she stroked occasionally the shining brass tube of the big gun against which her companion leaned. She was sixteen years of age, tall and blond, very slender and delicate, reminding one of those exotics that require a temperature all moisture, warmth, and light, to make their white and waxen petals expand, and give forth all their beauty and all their scent.

Alexis was more than three years her senior, and in love with her, and it was quite possible that a couple of years hence a union between them might be an arrangement as probable as it was pleasant for their families even now to contemplate. They were only distantly related to each other, but the boy and girl had been intimate since childhood. Count Alexis, when he left the Corps des Pages, had hesitated before adopting any career, but this war had decided his choice. He had assisted actively in the levying of the militia. Now the war was going to carry away the young volunteer, and, as the regiment was to leave Moscow on the morrow, he had come to-night to bid his fair cousin farewell.

Every thing about them spoke of war. At dinner the conversation had been military, and with old soldiers, as well as with new, the favorite topics had been alternately the field-piece newly presented by Prince Michael Zamiàtine to his country, and that regiment of volunteers raised in the government of Moscow, in which Alexis had a commission, which had been partly recruited on his estates, and which to-morrow, after receiving the blessing of the Metropolitan, was to leave for Odessa.

The youth was burning with hot valor. Véra, he said, would see, the Czar would see, and all Holy Russia and their mother Moscow would see, what his regiment was made of. A genuine Russian regiment, led by Russian *boyars*, to defend the blessed cause. Not, he said, "one of your new-fangled, Germanized affairs, with foreign names, and perhaps even with foreign officers in it, as you see sometimes among our line regiments —Germans and Poles, and Heaven knows who besides.* I like things to be national; do not you?"

"Yes," answered Véra, looking up at the sky, which, above the roofs of the court and houses, was cut by the tower of Ivan Véliki, one of the thousand spires of Moscow. She watched for a moment the circling flight of birds that swept round it now and again, and then went on: "Yes, I like it, and I suppose the soldiers themselves like it."

"Of course they do: not a man in a hundred thinks of addressing me as any thing but '*bátioushka*' (little father). Ah, you will see, we will do great things, Véra; you will see us come back with silver trumpets, like the regiment of Novoginsk,† or with the banner of St. George: or, if it were the fashion now, perhaps even with red stockings, like the regiment of Tchernigoff, that at Pultava waded up to its knees in blood."

"Oh, no, Alexis: with the silver trumpets, I hope, but not with red stockings. I should not like it—indeed, I should not. That is carnage, not war."

"Ah, but when a man enters a profession, he must make up his mind to all

* These so-called "militia" regiments were in reality volunteers raised during the Crimean War in every government. Almost every district had its division. The expense was defrayed by the nobility, and all the greatest houses enlisted. There was much enthusiasm displayed, and not only was the national dress adopted, but names of the old divisions were adopted, and counted by the *rota*, and the *sotna*, as in the pre-Peter I. times. Many of these troops never left Russia, but were used for garrison duty at home; the few regiments that went to the Crimea fought well however, especially at the battle of the Tchérnaya, and during the last days of the siege of Sebastopol. Each division received the name of some town or district.

† This regiment has borne the banner of St. George since the passage of the Alps under Souwaroff, in 1799; the trumpets were given to it in honor of its passage of the frozen Gulf of Bothnia in 1807.

the details of it. I have quite made up mine." And Alexis looked very fierce as well as very handsome, while his cousin smiled at him, and shook all her golden hair with distaste over this last alarming detail of the red stockings.

"I am very glad, though, Aleoshinka,* that you are going."

"Why, Véra *moja*, what a speech, when you know how very sorry I am to leave you!"

"You know I did not mean *that*, Alexis. I meant I am so glad that you are to be a soldier, and are not to have to stay dancing here while Russia is bleeding. Every one ought to take part in this war, even the women."

"Of course I could not be any thing but a soldier at such a time as this, and travelling, which my mother thinks I ought to like because my father did so, always seems stupid work—at least, when one is alone. I don't think I should ever have had the patience to go to Jerusalem, and back, as he did."

"No, you can fight for the Holy Places first, and it will be time enough to go and see them when they are ours; bought with Russian blood. Ah, Alexis, valor is better than curiosity; it comes next to prayer."

"Before it, *doushenka*,† for a man can both pray and fight. Yes, I will do that first and then travel; provided it is not alone, for I have never seen the beauty of a journey in one's own society."

"Well, now you will have plenty of comrades, and you will march with your troops, and there will be music, and the picture, and banners."

"Yes, of course; but I meant that when we are married, Véra, we will travel together."

Véra colored, and laughed.

"Mamma would say that you were now making a journey into the moon, and she reminds me sometimes when I take flights, that there is no *Guide Badæker** published for that country yet. Odessa seems far enough just now, does it not?"

"Yes, and who knows if I shall ever return? Véra, if I fall, you must not forget me."

"I will pray for you, and remember you dead as I always do living, dear Alexis."

"I may need it, for who can say if I shall ever return? I may be killed in my first battle, or I may die of fever, or perhaps if I do come back it may be as a cripple, without a leg or an arm; could you care for me then?"

"What difference could it make, except that we should all be more proud of you? But perhaps you will return with legs and arms, as you say, and find that it is I who am dead."

"Oh, my dearest Véra, you would not do that!"

"Why, not on purpose, Alexis," she answered laughingly, and then both their faces grew grave, as they looked at each other. "No, we know nothing of the future," Véra repeated dreamily, and as she said it her eyes again searched the sky, as if in its blue and limpid depths she hoped to see some augury. "Is it not the strangest thing of all," she resumed, "to think that be our fates what they may, they are already fixed: they are certain, they are waiting for us, nay, they are prepared, and rolling toward us now, at this very moment, and that we cannot avoid them?"

"On the contrary, every step we take is a step toward our death. 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave,' some of the English poets say that, I think."

"All paths lead there, though some go a longer way round. When Simony and I were born, it seems strange that though twins receive their breath together, it was death that was waiting for him, and life for me: whatever that life may turn out like."

* Diminutive of Alexis.

† *Doushenka*, literally the diminutive of *dusha*, the soul—used for darling—a term of endearment.

* The *Bradshaw* of Central Europe.

"It will be happy and bright if you will let me care for you through it, dear Véra;" and Alexis, sobered now out of all his little bellicose swagger, was just going to take her hand, when a servant came up to them.

"*Vàsche Siajtelstvo*,"* he said, "the Princess Anna Feodorovna desires you to know that the Countess Zotoff is with her now."

"Alexis! we ought to have been in the drawing-room ever so long before this. Are my curls respectably tidy?"

"Oh, lovely! You have the most beautiful golden hair, Véra, that ever—"

"Oh, you arch-flatterer! But we really must run now," and, catching up her shawl, Véra started off, and soon outstripped Count Alexis, who, to tell the truth, would fain have prolonged the *tête-à-tête*.

On the first landing of the stair she turned, and waited for him.

"Though you are a soldier, it seems that I can outrun you, Alexis, but let us storm the breach together," and then holding each other's hands, and singing a martial duet, they ran up to the door of the anteroom, where the sight of some of the waiting-women recalled Véra to demureness, and yet it was still with bright eyes, parted lips, and hurried breath, that she stood the next minute before her mother, and before the widowed Countess Prascovia Borisovna Zotoff.

Princess Zamiàtine glanced sharply at her child, and her maternal heart saw with relief by the girl's bright and animated manner that her bosom's lord still sat lightly on the throne. She had been anxious about her daughter, and saw with gratitude that Véra was by no means broken-hearted over the immediate departure of the young Count Alexis. This Véra was far too precious an only child to be allowed to pine for any one, be the hero who it might. As yet, however, every thing was well, and these raptures of Véra's during the last ten weeks about banners, regiments, prayers, and heroes, came only from an innocent and patriotic excitement.

Anna Feodorovna, the mother of my heroine, was of semi-Swedish extraction: a fair-haired, and very delicate woman, to whom, in spite of her truly northern birth, life in a northern climate had been one long martyrdom, and she was now at thirty-seven years of age a cripple from rheumatic gout, seldom leaving the sofa except to be carried out of her *salon* to more suffering and to bed. Yet in this suffering and disfigured body there lived a brave, almost an heroic spirit, and, though pain might force from her an occasional moan, it had never elicited a murmur, and to preserve herself as a companion to her child had become the great object of the Princess's life.

"Oh, what a day to-morrow will be!" ejaculated Véra, as she knelt down by the sofa, and, stroking her mother's hands, she looked at her tender face. "What a day! worth living for to see the most holy Philaréte bless our own regiment!"

"Hush! my child," said the Princess; "you forget that our good Aunt Prascovia Borisovna will then have to part with her son."

"Ah, Aunt Pascha! I am so sorry for you; but we will all go and see him off, and we will take care of you when he is gone. Alexis, you are to tell her what you said just now about the silver trumpets."

Alexis, who looked pleased, drew his chair nearer to that of Countess Zotoff, and said something soothing to her. The poor lady had tears in her eyes.

"I know there are dangers here as well as there—in peace as well as in war—and God, who protected my lamented husband, Dimitri Grigorovitch, on his journey to Jerusalem, can bring me back my son. But you will be careful, Aleoshinka *moj*, and not wet your feet."

Just as Alexis began an answer, the old general, Prince N——, approached

* The form of addressing a princess is, *Vàsche Siajtelstvo*, literally "Your lightship," from the verb to lighten, to shine, "Your shiningness."

her, and began to speak to her of the rewards and honors in store for her son; in fact, Alexis was the hero of the evening. He took his part very gracefully and well—the more so that if his heart beat high with hope, and with the pleasures of adventurous novelty, it was also heavy with the pain of parting from a mother, and from a cousin who was all but a betrothed. Véra, not yet self-conscious, not yet awake to anxiety or to love, was the more excited of the two, and her mother in turn had many compliments to receive on the beauty of her daughter—a beauty all flushed with patriotism and with fervor, if not with pride. Her eyes grew large and of a darker shade of violet blue, and to this she added the further charm of simplicity, for she did not know or care that she had been to-night proclaimed an absolute beauty. To-morrow—the all-important to-morrow—would prove that Alexis was, what she wished him to be—a hero.

CHAPTER V.

"GO WHERE GLORY WAITS THEE!"

En vérité un tel peuple a pour boulevard sa poitrine, et sa fidélité est pour lui une tour de salut.—*La Pentarchie Européenne.*

WITH the earliest dawn of that to-morrow all Moscow was on foot. It was as if a great fair was about to be held, and never, whether to eyes about to enter the town for curious pleasure only, or to eyes about to bid it farewell forever, had the mother-city, with her high belfries and her "pearl-like thousand crowns," seemed more beautiful or more proud. But pride, pleasure, and duty, all have their price, and a heavy one was to be paid to-day, both by poor wives and mothers of soldiers, who were not above showing their despair at the departure of the regiment, and by high-bred women like the Countess Zotoff, who if she wept shed her tears alone. Aftér a very early breakfast, Alexis's farewells were said. "Oh, my Alexis! my only son, my widow's mite, my all! —oh, my soul!" the mother cried, and Véra too wrung his hands, and blushed as he pressed hers again and again to his lips. "Come back soon," she cried, and waved her handkerchief after he left the house. And then the carriages were ordered round to take the whole party to the parade-ground, where the regiment was to be inspected, where a mass was to be said, and where the Metropolitan would give his blessing to the men. The Zamiàtines were in an open britska, but the mother of Alexis preferred to follow alone in a small close carriage.

A low mass—that of the Presanctified Elements—having been celebrated in a tent on the ground, and the 20th and 21st Psalms repeated, a grand *Te Deum* was sung, and then in the most unbroken and curious stillness, Philaréte, the Archbishop of Moscow and Kalomna, raised himself before the troops.

Confronting this new legion of the Czar he stood, a small, etherial-looking being, whose robes of golden tissue could not conceal the diminutiveness of his stature, any more than did his long flowing hair and beard take from his head an air of resolute personal courage. His smile was exquisite, and in the middle of his pale, passionless face shone pale-blue eyes of extraordinary beauty and extraordinary fire. The eyes were actually small, but when open they seemed to have an intensity of vision, the face appeared then to be all sight, just as the frail, puny body was all sensibility and all soul.

His mind, keen, penetrating, and yet great, seemed to have mastered in him all that there was of matter. In spite of a low and almost weak voice, he had the reputation of no ordinary rhetorical talent. He was greatly beloved, therefore, whenever he gave his benediction, the populace ever came together in crowds, and to-day this great concourse of the people, civil as well as military, as assembled on the Champs de Mars, waited breathlessly for him to speak.

He first delivered to the safe-keeping of the regiment the picture of its patron, a Saint Sergius, covered with gold plates, and set in a massive gold and jewelled frame.

He then said: "Children of the Czar our father, and of Russia our mother, brothers of the army, the Czar, the country, and Christianity, call upon you. The prayers of the Church and of the country accompany you. Holy Russia is again provoked by the enemy she vanquished before under Catharine II. and Alexander I. Already have your brothers revived the old habit of beating him by sea and land. It is decreed by Providence that you also are to see the enemy in front of you. Recollect, then, that you fight for the most pious of Czars, for your dear country, for the Holy Church, against the persecutors of Christianity, the profaners of those holy and venerable places which have seen the Birth, the Passion, and the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, if ever, are victory, glory, benediction, and bliss eternal, due to those who give their life for the faith, in defence of the Czar, and of the country. We bid you farewell with our prayers, and with this symbol of faith. In former times, Sergius, an old and venerable father and predecessor (and who for Russia ever lives), blessed the contest of your victorious ancestors against the oppressors of the country. His holy image was carried with our regiments under the Czars Alexis, Peter I., and Alexander I., in their great battles against the twenty nations. Let the image of the venerable Sergius go with you, as a pledge of the pressing and efficacious prayers which he ever addresses to God for you. Carry with you also the warlike and victorious speech of the Czar-Prophet David, how he said, 'Salvation and glory are of God.'"

When the Metropolitan had given the benediction to the prostrate mass of human beings before him, the drums began to roll, and as the troops defiled off the parade-ground, to the superb strains of "How glorious is our Lord in Sion," * they were followed slowly, but closely, by the carriages."

On reaching the Red Gates of the city a halt was sounded, and the crowd entering the portal was stopped by an if possible greater crowd coming out to meet it. In front were the Merchant Companies of Moscow, headed by their Provost, who brought out bread and salt, welcoming the soldiers in Oriental guise, while, in a still more emphatically Oriental manner, the common people fell at their feet, thanking the soldiers for going out in the cause of the country, and embracing their knees, as they now wept over their hands, and now kissed with fervor that "*Zemlia Moskovskaja zemlia Rouskaja*" (Earth of Moscow, Soil of Russia), for which, but for these poor militiamen, it might have been their own turn to bleed.

At length when eyes had looked their last the regiment was gone. Alexis, the young centurion,† had disappeared from Moscow, and to the pangs of separation was added the dreariness of reaction. Véra suffered least of all. She was so young, so hopeful, that visions of victory —victory for Russia, for her holy religion, and for her cousin—still filled her dreams. Out in the garden she, too, knelt and kissed the sod: "*Zemlia Moskovskaja* (Earth of Moscow)," she cried, "may he return to thee, worthy of thee! *Gospódi pomilouj nass!* (Lord, have mercy upon us!) *Amin.*"

She was at the age of enthusiasm when we do not suspect the dissimilarity of our own and of our neighbors' ideas, and she had hardly followed the political meanings or the many political anxieties which at this moment filled the heads of military men. Prince Michael Zamiàtine was, however, no stranger to them. The headstrong will of the great Czar, and

* An air we are now very familiar with in England, and generally sung with the words of the hymn, "Thine earthly Sabbaths."

† *Sotník*, captain of a hundred.

the equally imperious temper of one of his Ministers, had brought Russia at last into a collision with the great Western powers, an event for which it was the fashion in St. Petersburg to say that she was so amply prepared, that there could be no doubt of her splendid success. But to practical men that success was a more problematical affair. Though the Czar reigned over an eighth part of the globe —from the Polar snows to the sunburnt rocks of Yalta and Aluptka—and though he was master of more than sixty millions of men, his subjects were of varied races, and it was to be feared that Russia might prove a tree whose branches were only tied to it, and not a trunk sending forth strong arms full of sap and vigor. On paper the Russian army was magnificent, yet the seat of war was distant. The theatre of war was extensive, and it might become (as it did) still further extended. In the great war of Catharine II. against Sweden, Russia had once before been so depleted of men that the very *frotteurs* of the Empress's palaces had been enlisted, and she had seen herself left without guards at Tzarkoe-Sélo. Such times might come again. However, in the mean time, as it had pleased the Czar to go to war, Prince Michael Zamiàtine was fain to give what help he could both to the finances and to the military strength of his master. He robbed his treasure-chamber of some hundred poods of plate, he cut down a forest, and he sold the timber to the Jews, and with the proceeds he equipped half a hundred men raised on his estate, and he also presented a fine field-piece to the country and the regiment.

Now the troops were gone, and a season of retrenchment and privacy was before him and his family, to be rewarded, as he believed, in the future, by the success of the Russian arms, and, as he also hoped, by the smiles of the Czar.

It was long since those smiles had fallen on Michael Zamiàtine; so long, that, weary of missing them, and still more weary of waiting for them, h abandoned St. Petersburg, where h once been a favorite courtier, and buried himself in Moscow, except at times as his wife's bad health comp him to travel. And to Prince Mich credit as a husband, be it said, tha had never betrayed by sign or token sense of annoyance to his wife, tho Anna Feodorovna had been undoubte the cause of his disgrace at court. was allowed to remain ignorant of fact—ignorant that their frequent sences from Russia, and her own extre intimacy with Madame Swetchine, well as her leaning (derived from M dame Swetchine) toward the Church Rome, had all offended the patriotis and the orthodoxy of Nicholas. "*L'ét c'est moi!*" is an autocratic enough se timent, but Nicholas went far beyon this. He was ready, with Medea, to sa "Myself suffices," and to contend tha his court, his climate, his faith, his man ners, and his customs must, could, an should suffice to any well-disposed Rus sian. Anna Feodorovna had lived much abroad—*ergo*, she was discontented a home; Anna Feodorovna corresponded with Jesuits, and with the leaders of the Dominican revival—*ergo*, she might have unsound views on the Polish and other questions; she was lukewarm, and, therefore, she was ungrateful. Toward her husband the Czar's friendship, from all these causes, gradually cooled. First one request was denied, and then another; permission to travel was sometimes rudely granted, and sometimes rudely refused, and still the Prince hoped on, waiting for the cloud to be dispelled from the Imperial brows, of which he did not even know the cause. At last, when, one day, his name was mentioned to the Czar, and the Czar had replied with a Jove-like frown, that "Michail Vassilievitch was unfortunate in his marriage," then he saw that the case was a hopeless one, and, leaving the capital, he withdrew, as I have said, to Moscow, and to

the old seat of his race, where he brought up its sole scion and representative, his only daughter, Princess Véra.

She was a beautiful and delicate girl, full of patriotic enthusiasm, and speaking her native language with a purity and proficiency which, thirty years before, had been very uncommon among the women of her class; graceful, and full of promise as she was, her father also saw with pleasure that her own sympathies would probably lead her to make a Russian marriage, and to adopt more national ideas than had ever inspired his wife. In this way he would not even be tempted to sacrifice his child to his loyalty, or to his ambition—for I do not know by which name a Russian noble, who is great already by birth, and by the possession of broad lands, calls his devotion to the sovereign who is at once the fountain of honor and of preferment.

Should the young Count Zotoff, who had just left them, reap laurels in this war, he would prove all the more suitable a match for the young enthusiast, and thus it was from many motives and for many reasons that the father of Princess Véra opened his house that summer to Countess Zotoff, while he said, with all his heart, "God speed the regiment of Moscow militia, especially the hundred of Kalomna, and its centurion Alexei Dimitrivitch, whom the saints have ever in their keeping!"

CHAPTER VI.

INKERMANN.

Did ye not hear it? No; 'twas but the wind,
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street.
Childe Harold.

Arrived at Odessa, Alexis Zotoff wrote in the highest spirits. The town, he said, was full of troops, and large reenforcements from the Danubian provinces poured into it daily. Cholera was severe, but the courage of his regiment was high. When the news of the intended invasion of the Crimea reached him, he seemed to be breathlessly anxious to proceed to the seat of war, and his mother smiled and trembled alternately at each of the paragraphs in her boy's letters. At length, when the landing at Eupatoria had been effected by the Allies, his spirits did not seem to suffer from an event which only added fuel to the fire of his patriotism. It was true, he admitted, that the enemy had set foot in the Crimea, and that on the anniversary of the day on which Napoleon had overlooked Moscow from the Vorobéevya Gora (Sparrow Hills); but was not that in itself an augury for their overthrow? Every Tartar streamlet would prove a new Beresina, and the swords of the faithful would soon drive the Allies back into the sea, and to the ships which had first carried them to the shores of the Chersonese.

When the battle of the Alma had proved all such fair promises delusive, it became impossible to make the reserves believe that a victory had been gained where a defeat had really been sustained, but it was easy, on the other hand, to make them feel that the time had come when their services would be required, and the prospect of immediate action soon cheered the young centurion. His regiment now formed part of the Sixteenth Division, it was highly praised for its drill and discipline, and was included in the force under immediate orders for Sebastopol.* A long march was before Alexis and his "hundred" of Kalomna, but he would write, he said, when, and as he could. "Tell Véra," he concluded, "that her banner is in our hands, and never shall it fall into the

* I repeat that it is by an historical license only that the Moscow militia is represented as incorporated into this division; but it is true that many of the regiments of both the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Divisions did make the march, as described here, from Moscow to Odessa, and thence to Sebastopol: leaving Odessa early in October, they reached the city on the 2d and 3d days of November.

hands of the enemy. To-morrow it flutters on the way to victory. Mother, Véra, friends, Alexis bids you farewell. Odessa, October 4, 1854."

The march was rendered doubly trying to him and his troops from the violent rains that set in at the end of the vintage. As battalion followed battalion, a prodigious mass of infantry now covered the whole line of route, and the Moscow militia among the rest, as they made their apprenticeship in war, were no strangers to either hunger, weariness, or disease. They had to become acquainted then with woful sights of deserted homesteads, and of dying comrades, and with dreary sounds also of moaning men, and of straining beasts of burden; in short, they were strangers to nothing except to fear or to discontent. Every available means of conveyance was seized upon by the authorities—Tartar *arabas*, mules, wagons, and carriages of every description—so that those whom weakness or disease made unable to march might be able to keep up, for a time, at least, with the headquarters of their corps; but when all these resources failed, too many were left behind, and men and animals alike perished in the weary way, from exhaustion, exposure, and want. From Kherson to Perekop, from Simpheropol to beautiful Batchiserai, by the heights of the Belbek, by the aqueducts of the Tchérnaya valley, and by the ruins of Inkermann, they held on till they reached Sebastopol at last, in numbers sufficiently great to infuse fresh confidence into its defenders, and to fill with new courage the hearts of the besieged.

But well might Grand-Duke Michael, that martinet of the parade-ground, say of war, that "he hated it, because it ruined the uniforms," for drenched with autumnal rains, and splashed with autumnal mire, were all the reënforcements which arrived. By every route they came, and of "food for powder" there was now a goodly supply both within the fortifications and without. General Pauloff's divisions were quartered on the north side, but Soïmonoff's troops, including the Tenth and part of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Divisions, entered the town, to be welcomed by the besieged, and by the two young Grand-Dukes, Michael and Nicholas, whose presence lent a certain air of gala to their reception. Alexis saw with satisfaction that his own travel-stained appearance was quite as generally acceptable, if not more so, than the spick and span daintiness of some young *Pétersburgeois* newly arrived, like himself, at the seat of war, and less prepared than he had been, by a march of about three hundred miles, for what they might next have to encounter. His regiment was the cynosure of every eye—the shirt, the red sash, and the high boots of the national Russian dress, which they wore, distinguished them from all other troops, and it only remained for them to prove under fire that they could perform all they promised. The young centurion's first night in the city was a sleepless one, for it was spent in the "*bastion du Mât;*" hearing for the first time gun answering to gun, and roar to roar. No casualties occurred that night, but on the next he was made to see war in earnest, for first one gunner and then another was killed near him in the same battery; and this night—that of the 4th November—only preluded a day of incessant preparation and toil. The Russian commanders determined at this stage to put a stop to the siege, and, invigorated rather than depressed by the affair of the 26th of October, now intended to pour a fresh army on the advanced lines of the Allies, and, to make this attack decisive, they hoped to give it all the features of a surprise. Advantage was to be taken of the darkness just before the dawn, and of the many and deep ravines in which that portion of the valley of the Tchérnaya abounds; and every appeal was made to the courage of the soldiers as well as to their faith—a

picture of the Saviour, a gift from the Empress, having been brought into the city by Prince Galitzin on the 31st of October, when its procession from barrack to bastion caused the greatest sensation there. "I saw," wrote Alexis, as he scrawled on his knee what might be a last letter to his mother—"I saw men kissing it with tears of emotion and of pious, grateful veneration." The same men had to learn that *laborare est orare*, for through the 4th of November their labors were severe, as they dragged into position the guns that were to tell so effectively in the engagement now planned for the following day.

When two armies are brought face to face in the field, and when both are aware that a few hours more will decide the fate of many by "the last argument of kings," the night hours are generally spent in much the same manner on both sides. The council at headquarters, the hurried letters, and the gathering round the camp-fires, are features common to both the attack and the defence, but this night of the 4th of November presented no such features. A drenching rain continued to fall as it had done all day, a great number of soldiers were at work or on guard in the English trenches, and the fire from the batteries, never very heavy on that day, slackened so much as night approached, that in the camp of the Second Division a sharp ear might have detected at times some rumbling noises in the valley beneath, caused, as it was said, by the rolling and creaking of the Tartars' *arabas*, which in constant strings, with laboring bullocks, and with groaning axles, dragged up by night and by day, through mud and through mire, Sebastopol's apparently endless supplies.

Colonel St. John, like all his neighbors of the First Division, would never have dreamt of ascribing these sounds (supposing him to have heard them) to any new or alarming cause. He was only prevented, as it happened, from going very early to rest, by a long and almost gay conversation with his brother Philip, of the Grenadier Guards, who had come to see him, and to read over a bundle of letters from home. They chatted for some time over the contents, Philip giving vigorous pulls at his cigar, while he bestowed hearty maledictions on the rain, and professed himself to be uncommonly tired of what he styled "this business." "There was nothing for a fellow to do now, except hate himself and despise his income. He should be driven to writing a letter to-morrow if this horrible rain lasted; but he wished the Russians would give him another chance of licking them. When there was nothing to do it was a nuisance, and the dreariest affair he had ever seen a sketch of: lucky fellow, Newbold, to be out of the mess!"

Colonel Newbold, invalided home from Varna, had just reached London, and was reported in this letter from his betrothed, Miss St. John, as recovering from the effects of the fever, and as doing credit already to her care.

"There are some more bills of mine, it seems," said Philip St. John; "I am sure I knew nothing about them, but as they have been sent in to my mother, and as she says she has paid them, it is all right. These compliments of the season to a poor man out in the Crimea might really have been omitted, I think; however, as she says she has paid them it's all right: only it is a deplorable way of spending good money," added the young gentleman, philosophically, as he made some futile advances to Bob, the dog belonging to the Scots Fusileers. "What a cunning brute it is!" he exclaimed, as the terrier contrived as usual to give him the slip (Bob would not allow himself to be touched by an officer), and then Philip stuffed his letters into his pockets, lit another cigar, and finally took himself off to his own tent, splashing and grumbling as he went. Soon after, Colonel St. John lay down, but he and the brother officer who shared his

little dog-kennel tent, did not find their domicile peculiarly water-tight on this occasion, and they slept but little, even though in the course of another hour a more than ordinary stillness prevailed.

Yet this, had they but known it, was the very night of the "thief."

While yet the wheels of the Russian guns fell noiselessly on the moist and yielding earth, at 2.30 A. M. Pauloff's divisions began their march, and they reached the bridge over the Tchérnaya, and the ravines which led up to the English right, before an alarm of any kind was raised. With him came many guns, and 13,500 bayonets.

At 4 A. M. the great bells of Sebastopol began to ring, and then the other half of the force which was to fall upon the sleeping besiegers mustered to arms.

The churches were filled, and thither repaired many of the commanding officers, though the soldiers themselves did not (as the popular English reports averred) attend the solemn mass intended to call down upon the armies of the Czar the blessing of a too partial Heaven. So far at least the skies were propitious to them, and a misty darkness reigned as Soïmonoff's columns issued from the town. Of these some were tried and some were untried soldiers: all looked for victory, some hoped for revenge: all were silent, obedient, and strong. Their path lay to the left of the Malakoff Hill, and it was by the western side of the Kilene Balka that they were intended to throw themselves on the English left, while Pauloff's forces fell on our right, and while far to the westward a feigned attack by the Russians was to prevent any coöperation on the part of the French.

The hour had come, and the men.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER.

L'infanterie anglaise est la meilleure du monde: heureusement il n'y en a pas beaucoup.—GENERAL BUGEAUD.

IT was now about 5 A. M., and as General Codrington rode along the outposts, the English lines were all dark and silent, as in the night. The sentries answered "All's well" to his challenge, and the officer rode on.

Suddenly a rattle of musketry smote on his ear. It came, as he found, from a neighboring coppice, where a picket, on the left of the Light Division, had just been surprised. In what force the Russians might be present there was not light enough to show, but danger there was to some extent, greater or smaller, and Codrington galloped back to turn out the camp, and in another moment our bugles had sounded the alarm.

In truth the great enterprise now touched the moment of its accomplishment, and a vast cloud of skirmishers covered the columns which were fast converging for our destruction. But soldiers, like shepherds, may be wearied out by the cry of "Wolf!" and thus it happened that, when the bugles rang out along the lines at this matutinal hour of Sunday, the Fifth of November, Colonel St. John, like most of the officers of the brigade, concluded in his own mind that the cause was probably but a trifling one, and nothing more than one of those alarms with which, on many previous nights and mornings, the Russians had tried their tempers and disturbed their rest. He had even some difficulty in rousing his companion, and it was nearly six o'clock before the regiment was fairly under arms. The day was then faintly lightening in the east, but a close, fine rain continued to fall, making the ground more wet, the air more dark, and the contour of all objects more uncertain.

The Grenadiers were already on the

ground, and beginning to lead, so the order to form into column, and to support them, was no sooner given, than it was executed by the Scots Fusileers, who then in this order began their march out of camp, across some distance of slightly-undulating ground, covered with brushwood, or with a stiff coppice, consisting of dwarf oaks and acacias.

Still, a great uncertainty prevailed as to whether any thing more than an "alert" was being practised upon them by the Russians, and, when advancing, the nature of the ground was such as to cause the Fusileers to fall into some little disorder; but it was only the disorder of a moment, for already the Russian guns on the farther (the Inkermann) side of the valley had come into play, and their red blazing shells, as they came plunging through the morning mist, rending its gray veil for an instant, and then falling, to burst, perhaps, in the coppice, convinced the officers that a serious engagement was intended, or rather had already begun. The sight of a riderless horse, which, terribly mangled, rushed past just then in a maddened gallop, added still more to this conviction; and the men were ordered to lie down, while their colonel rode on to reconnoitre.

The day had dawned. In that pale mist, companies might well have been taken for battalions, and regiments for brigades, yet, such as it was, the daylight now sufficed to show the figures of the Duke of Cambridge, of the Brigadier, and of their staff, with the Grenadiers formed up on the right, and two columns of Russian infantry slowly ascending the hill in front of the Sandbag Battery.

The psalmody, and the curses of theological import, in which General Soïmonoff's soldiers had indulged when they issued from Sebastopol, were now hushed. Not a whisper, not a cough, not a sigh, broke from their ranks, as in the most deathlike silence they breasted the hill, and their two dark masses looked like two great patches of a darker gray, on the face of that gray and mist-covered slope.

A few breathless moments more, and the two armies must close; and breathless indeed were those moments to the Guards, for (in order to make himself heard, and to enforce an order to the Grenadiers to change their position), the Duke of Cambridge might be seen during them, riding with his staff between the fire of friends and foes, utterly regardless of personal risk. At last, when one wing of that regiment had wheeled, the two armies found themselves face to face.

A more than dropping fire had been going on for some time, but now the Fusileers poured their first rattling volley into the always-advancing foe. The advantage of the ground was with the English, and when this fire was followed by a charge with the bayonet, the columns opposed to them wavered, and then retired (but in order), the rear-ranks firing as they went.

A second time the Russians, in more formidable numbers, pressed up the hill. A second time the Guards met them with a deadly, telling fire, and followed it with the bayonet: again the Russian columns gave way; but this time not in order: and then for the third time they reformed, and steadily advanced to the attack.

The Fusileers had got their blood up; at least it was rising, and this threatened to hurry their aim.

"Steady, lads! steady, there! take a good aim!" cried Colonel St. John to his company, and then their murderous volley flew. "Steady!" he shouted again, and as he spoke he raised his right hand as if to curb their impatience. He had good cause through life to remember that instant and its gesture, for it probably pointed him out as a mark to a Russian sharp-shooter, and, while the words were still on his lips, his other arm was shattered by a shot just above the elbow, and it fell powerless by his side.

For a moment the shock was paralyzing, and then the blood began to trickle down his sleeve upon the blue cloak he wore. Yet it was not a moment to think of pain.

"Had you not better go to the rear, sir?" asked his sergeant.

"No, it is only the left arm," was the reply, and, after drawing, Colonel St. John again waved his right one, cried "Come on!" and led the third repulse.

The Russians turned, and the Fusileers would fain have pursued them down the hill, had not a staff-officer ridden up at that moment with an order forbidding them to pass beyond its brow. Such caution was required, for in truth the position of the Guards was now an anxious one. Pauloff's and Soïmonoff's columns in coming from different directions had managed to converge far more closely than had been intended, and, though it is true that by mistaking in the darkness one side of the ravine for the other, their divisions were, when they met, hampered from want of room, not the less were their dense and overpowering masses dangerous to the Guards, upon whom their weight, and indeed the whole brunt of the battle, must fall.

The Sandbag, the one small battery in which the brigade might have defended themselves, had neither guns nor banquette, and the Russian guns, so industriously dragged into position on the previous day, had now come into play. Not only did they render it difficult to bring up reënforcements to the hard-pressed regiments, but they also rendered the passage to the rear a matter of the greatest danger to the wounded.

Yet to the rear Colonel St. John must now make up his mind to retire, for pain and loss of blood were making his knees to tremble, and his head to swim.

CHAPTER VIII.

BETWEEN THE DEAD AND THE DYING.

> Più non si desta
> Di qua dal suon dell' angelica tromba.
> *Inferno*. Canto VI.

STAGGERING he went, but stumbling bravely on, and refusing the offer of a stretcher, as with much difficulty he made his way for a little distance. The first thing that, by arresting his attention, stopped him, was the body of his friend and brother officer, Captain ——. It was an awful foretaste of the day's ravage in their ranks, and of its pangs, to see this man lying on his back, with his arms wide apart, while with one hand he still grasped the naked blade of a sword which was planted more than half its length in the ground. Rolled over by a shot, he was to all appearance dead, and before this spectacle Colonel St. John paused to gaze. What a contrast was here! Nothing but the strong soldier's instinct, still true in death, to tell of the fine young fellow who, the day before, had been the life and soul of the regiment. "Shall I never hear that jovial voice again—never see that sunny face?" said the wounded man to himself; and longer he would have mourned had not a round shot, striking the ground immediately in his front, awakened him from his trance of sadness, and he resumed his march to the rear, fortunate in so far that he continued to avoid the shells, whose course in long parabolic curves he was able to watch and calculate ere they fell.

This flight of projectiles from the batteries on the Inkermann hills completely commanded his track, and it was in itself a source of great danger to the falling back of a wounded man, especially if, like Colonel St. John, he was beginning to feel faint. He descried now at a little distance a disabled gun-carriage, and a broken-down ammunition-wagon, sheltered in some measure by the rather

closer brushwood of the spot. Near them were some moving objects, and on walking toward these he found them to be some men of his own brigade, who were having their wounds dressed by Dr. Elkington, previous to being removed to their camp whenever the ambulances might come to their succor. Of these, many were already beyond the reach of human aid; others were fast groaning out their dying breath, and perhaps with that last breath also some last messages to England.

Henry St. John lay down among them, heedless at first of who might be his nearest companions in trouble, till, as his eyes wandered about him, he perceived at the distance of about ten yards a body which was immovable, and which, from its blue cloak, was plainly that of an officer of the Household Brigade.

Toward this he contrived to crawl, meaning to offer to the sufferer all that remained of the contents of his pocket-flask. But was this, indeed, still a sufferer? With a groan, forced from him by the pain in his left arm, he contrived to kneel down, and to lift the cape which partially covered the head. Blood he saw oozing from a wound in the side of the neck, but the face was averted, and then Colonel St. John, shuddering with some strange intuition of pain, gave one gentle pull to the shoulder, and turned the body round so as to see it. It was that of his brother Philip, the youngest ensign of the Grenadier Guards, and the face was the face of a corpse. Mortally wounded in the first hour of the engagement round the Sandbag Battery, Philip St. John had been carried so far by some drummers, and then, when his case was seen to be hopeless, he had been laid down here under the cover of the bush.

Colonel St. John sickened at the sight. The boy was dead—never again to gladden a mother's sight, or to whisper soft nonsense in a woman's ear. Dead! and already stiffening: with filmy eyes, and with his fair whiskers and his white throat all clotted with gore. Dead! but dead at least by a painless death, and dead as a soldier should die.

Another blue cloak he now also remarked at a little distance from where he was, but he had not strength or heart to move from the dear object at his knee, and though that object was senseless to a brother's care, he remained holding its clammy hand in his own.

It was strange to feel that with the death of this lad, and with Annie's marriage, his personal task in this world had ended. He had tried to do his duty by them, and should death also overtake him on this Crimean field it would find him beside his charge and beside his dead: and if, he said to himself, a father's two sons had in their lifetime had little, too little, in common, in death, at least, they would not be divided. With such thoughts the sore wounded man continued to bend above the slain, while he heard first one shell and then another, come winging through the air, and over all nearer sounds the distant and perplexed roar of the conflict.

It was about this time that the Guards, whose ammunition was exhausted, began to give way. Overpowered by numbers, they had to retire, leaving the Sandbag Battery in the hands of the enemy, whose further possession of all the adjacent ground was only disputed by a few weak, worn, but desperately unyielding, spirits.

The Russians, making the most of a present advantage, came pressing on, no longer always now in the serried columns of the morning attack, but rather in the furious disorder of victory. Some of them even approached the spot where Colonel St. John lay, and it was their yells, as they came trampling through the brushwood, which first awakened him to a sense of new and real danger.

These men seemed to be stragglers, for no officers were with them, and, drunk with blood, they seemed to own no control. Two of the foremost he saw rush toward the other blue cloak, which lay,

as I have said, a little to his right, and then with a shout of "*Och, Poganoi!*" (ah, Pagan!) they struck their bayonets sure and home into the quivering body of that wounded officer.

At their first approach, Colonel St. John had grasped his revolver, determined to defend his brother's corpse, and to await the event beside it, but at this sight his blood boiled. In an instant he fired on them, missed his aim, and again cocked his pistol. He was in the very act of firing for the second time, when a Russian officer, a fair-haired young man, leaped swiftly out of the brushwood, crying, "Cease, you swine!" and, just as he passed, he received the ball intended for the savages under his command. He flung up his arms, gave a sharp cry, and there, between Colonel St. John's feet, and the murdered officer in blue, Alexis Zotoff fell.

The danger of the living but one-armed Guardsman was now at its climax. Another moment, and these disorderly militiamen might well avenge on him their centurion's death and his random shots. But just now the long-looked-for reënforcement to the brigade appeared in sight, and on the approach of Sir George Cathcart's division, not only did these stragglers take to flight, but all the Russian columns then on the plateau gave way for a time, Cathcart heroically following them down the hill, to be there, as we know, outnumbered and slain.

Colonel St. John, his danger passed, found himself again comparatively alone. On one side of him lay his brother's corpse, and on the other hand was the young Russian, vomiting blood, as he leaned against a broken stump.

"Try to drink this, and then let me look at your wound. Yonder is one of our surgeons," said Henry St. John, in French, as he offered some brandy to his victim.

"Who fired that shot?" gasped the youth, in English as pure as the Guardsman's own.

"I did. My wound makes me half blind: and as you sprang past you received the charge."

"Ah! I see: you were only doing your duty, however. Those unruly hounds of mine!" But Count Zotoff had to pause, choked by the blood which rose every moment to his lips, while the air panted through the orifice in his chest.

"Here," he said, showing the wound: "and it is through the right lung, I suspect."

"Try to drink this," urged Colonel St. John.

"It would do no good," gasped Alexis: "drink it rather yourself—it may save your life. Mine, I fear, is past help."

"Do not give up hope so soon."

"I cannot waste breath on hopes: death is too near, or at least seems so to me."

"I would it were my life, and not yours. Forgive me!"

"Forgive you, *mon ami?* Why, it might just as easily have been the other way. I would, or I might, have done the same thing—it was an accident. Both of us were at our duty."

"But you are too young to die."

"A soldier dies when his hour comes. But will you do something for me?"

"Any thing that is in my power. Any command you may lay on me I will execute, so help me God."

"Take a message for me; but first drink that brandy. No, no, I won't take it. It will save your life. You must need it, for you seem only less weak than I am. Is it only your arm that is hurt?"

"That is my only wound."

"Ah, you will do; and take these." And the young centurion pulled out of his pocket, and handed to the Englishman, a little bit of black bread, and a handful of *papiros.** They were rolled in a fine pocket-handkerchief, and had been Alexis's sole supplies.

Henry St. John felt choked at the

* Cigarettes.

sight of these things, given, as they were, too, with a sweet and frank smile. His victim shook his head gently, and then, pulling off his cap, he lay down as if exhausted. He appeared to be about twenty years of age, tall, and very handsome, as his fair and close-clustering curls, and his high-bred face, showed now above his gray great-coat.

With some difficulty, he drew a small gold cross from under his uniform, and Colonel St. John noticed, as he did so, his peculiar dress—the red sash and the high black boots.

"This cross," he said, as he broke the little faded blue ribbon on which it hung, "I should like to have sent to Russia, to my mother, Countess Prascovia Borisovna Zotoff. Send it when you can. And this——" But the tide of blood, as it welled up to his lips interrupted him, and his voice was getting very feeble. He contrived to unpin the badge which adorned his cap—a small eight-pointed cross made of gold, and stamped with a motto—and now held this for a moment in his hand till he could find breath to speak. "This," he continued at last, "I wish to be given to my cousin and betrothed, Véra Michailovna Zamiàtine. Tell her—that next to the joy and pride of being her husband I value—that of dying 'for the Faith and the Czar.'* Will you do this for me?" he added with a gasping sigh.

"Trust me, trust me," answered Colonel St. John, as he placed his right hand in that of the dying boy.

"I do trust you. What a good face you have! Have you a wife or a betrothed?"

"No, and I have no mother; and there," pointing to the body on the ground, "there is my only brother."

"Ah, I am very sorry for you; but —" and then, as the blood ebbed away, a faintness as of death came over Alexis. His eyes closed, and Colonel St. John thought him dead, when again the eyes opened, wide, blue, and confiding like a child's.

"*Embrassez moi*" (kiss me), he whispered in French.

Colonel St. John put his lips to the fair young forehead. Alas! it was already cold, and this was death's chill.

"Tell me your name, dear boy," he said: but there was no answer—only another fast-coming and fast-flying smile. The lips moved, however, and then, as Colonel St. John bent lower and lower to catch any word that they might form, a fragment of a shell caught his stooping head, and laid him senseless beside his victim.

About eleven o'clock the ambulances picked him up, and carried away to the surgeon's table an unconscious and an all but hopelessly-wounded man.

How, after that moment of the blow, the battle went, Colonel St. John knew not. He recked not how the Grenadier Guards had forced their way again into the Sandbag Battery, nor how, when ammunition was spent, there had raged there a battle of the gods and Titans, when, with sticks, and stones, and bayonet-thrusts, the possession of that much-contested spot was by the Household Brigade won and lost and lost and won.

Nor did he know how, when English strength was wellnigh spent, and reserves exhausted, while fresh and always fresh Russian regiments kept coming to the front, a rattle of musketry and a blare of trumpets at last announced the coming of our allies—Zouaves and Chasseurs—to the rescue of England's chivalry, to tear away from Russia the prize of a five hours' hand-to-hand combat.

How, then, the regiment of Ochotzk flung itself on Bosquet's reënforcements; how, when the *drapeau* of the 6ième was lost, its colonel gave his life in exchange for the piece of red silk, which his men took safely home with them to France; how the two English guns were recovered by the 55th; how Soïmonoff

* *Za Vérou i Tsarja*, For the Faith and the Czar. See the motto on the badge.

fell, and Dannenberg and Pauloff at length led back their men; how, when their great retreat at last began, it was still under a murderous fire, the English pressing on their rear with sharp bayonet-charges, while the huge guns of the Vladimir and the Chersonese in the roadstead roared their bass in the last discords of that day's din—all this let the historian tell. Let the English bury their dead, and ship away their wounded; for this, "the battle of the foot-soldier," and one of the hardest struggles he ever knew, has been fought and likewise won.

CHAPTER IX.

SCUTARI.

Al tornar della mente, che si chiuse
. . . . . .
Nuovi tormenti e nuovi tormentati
Mi veggio intorno.

Inferno: Canto VI.

On the 12th of November H. M. S. *Mauritius*, on her way out from Balaclava, had hoped to make the pier at Scutari. She had two hundred and thirty wounded men, and three officers on board, and, of these last, one was Colonel Henry St. John, now deprived of his left arm, and only dimly conscious at intervals, either of that loss, or of the miseries of the crowded and uneasy transit.

But worse miseries were in store for him. Instead of making good her landing, the *Mauritius* found herself caught in that terrible gale which not only on the 17th caused the loss of the *Black Prince*, and of innumerable transports, but also kept our wounded from Inkermann tossing up and down for more than three days and nights. It was within sight of a shore she could not make, that the *Mauritius* here pitched and tossed; vessels they saw break from their moorings, and drift ashore; boats and caïques were blown up into the Bosphorus; roofs of mosques and houses blew about; the very kiosk to which many of the wounded were to have been sent became a wreck: and when, at length, the hurricane abated, and quarters were finally found for him in the barrack hospital, Colonel St. John was carried ashore in the raging delirium of brain fever. Want of the necessary attendance, and all the uproar of the crowded vessel during the gale, had finished what the blow on the head had begun, and reason had for the present departed from her seat.

In the hospital, among those endless corridors of moaning and miserable men, he once managed, by giving his attendants the slip, to appear. More like a spectre than a man, he came wandering through them, his aspect even there being preëminent in pain; but he was caught, and, when the false strength of his feverish frenzy had burnt itself out, he was carried back to what his servant, his doctor, and his colonel, could only suppose to be a death-bed. But not so. The player does not leave the stage forever because in one piece his fortune seems to be desperate. The tree does not perish because in a November blast its last sear or crimson leaf may have been shed, and not till "after *many* summers dies the swan;" and so Colonel Henry St. John recovered.

I should say rather that he lived: for recovery does not accurately describe the state of a breathing skeleton taken on board a friend's frigate, and then, when able to speak, sent home to England.

Mrs. St. John, who never could bring herself wholly to forgive Providence for the death of her son Philip, was, until she actually beheld him again, perhaps not sufficiently inclined to thank Providence for the preservation of her stepson. But once she saw him her heart melted; for, though foolish and faulty, she was a woman and a mother, and, during his weeks of helplessness in Cadogan Place, the Colonel had no reason to complain of want of care.

One subject had during all this time

lain, as may be supposed, in abeyance—that of the Russian relics.

Though out of sight and out of mind, the two crosses given to the Guardsman by the dying Alexis were safe, although it was not till long after his return to England that they fell under Colonel St. John's own notice. Taken from his person before the amputation of his arm in the surgeon's tent, and while he was still unconscious, they had been preserved, and they were now, along with a letter and a pocket-knife, restored to him among his other small properties. So safe, then, but forgotten, they had remained since that hour among the Crimean brushwood, when he had himself lain wounded between the dying and the dead. Indeed, even these facts concerning them were not readily remembered at first. It was days before the weakened head could catch up the long-lost train of association, and at best the recollection remained imperfect. These things had been given him, no doubt, by a Russian to send back to Russia; but by whom? and for whom? Ah! there was the point: and on that point memory, hazy besides on some others, was at present an absolute blank.

Alas for the bereaved ones in Moscow! To them, at least, through these relics, their dead Alexis would never be able to speak.

PART II.

IN WHICH THE WHEEL CONTINUES TO TURN.

Ein Fichten Baum steht einsam
Im Norden auf kahler Höh.

. . . . . .

Er traümt von einer Palme,

. . . . . .

HEINE.

CHAPTER X.

REACTION.

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
Che la diritta via era smarrita.

Ahi quanto, a dir qual era, è cosa dura,
Questa selva selvaggia ed aspra e forte,
Che nel pensier rinnova la paura.

Tanto è amara, che poco è più morte.
Inferno: Canto I.

THE great poet who saw, as in a vision, the star-floors of paradise, and the nether circles of hell, is not the only man who, between the ages of thirty and forty, has found himself among the shadows of a "wild, rough, and stubborn wood." Nor yet is Dante the only one who, on emerging from that mental crisis, has looked back upon it almost with fear. It is felt to have been such a bitter experience that a little more of it would have been death, and then such a gloom, death itself can hardly be more painful.

The cause of this suffering is *ennui;* and it is a mistake to suppose that only the idle or the trivial can fall a prey to it. For if by *ennui* we mean want of interest, and not only a want of present stimulus to exertion, but also that profound discouragement, and that sickliness of all the mental powers, which makes us look on the past with disappointment, and on the future with dread, while the present cannot rouse us out of indifference—if this be *ennui* in its worst shape, then minds of a high order have suffered from it, and, like the great Florentine, have shivered in its shadow. Only he and they have not succumbed to it. They have confessed its horrors, but they have forced their way out of it, and struggled against the darkness, until the darkness broke.

Colonel St. John made this most trying experience in the years that followed his return to England, and the breaking-up of his home after the marriage of his sister to Colonel Newbold. Annie St. John was married on just such a snowy spring day, in 1855, as that on which she had seen her lover start for the East in 1854. The happy couple took a villa near Windsor, and then the home in Cadogan Place ceased to exist. Mrs. St. John was free to spend her time as she pleased, and Colonel St. John settled into a lodging in Curzon Street, undisputed master, for the future, of his person and of his time.

That empire was not long in proving a sad enough one, particularly as the one-armed soldier was still, to all intents and purposes, an invalid, and of course stoutly refused to be regarded as such.

He missed all his old occupations.

There was no more grouse-shooting to look forward to in Ross-shire: the long salmon-rod had to be laid aside forever: there were no more billiards at Pratt's, not even any cricket at Hurst Royal, where he could only bob for perch in the lake, take Help, the mastiff, long rambling walks, or try to read in his uncle's library. But reading is an art that requires practice, and knowledge is a mistress not to be wooed in a hurry, or made a *pis-aller* of, and so books did not at first bring all the solace that he expected from them.

Nothing could exceed Lord Kendal's tenderness, or the pleasure which he felt in his nephew's society; therefore Colonel St. John spent the greater part of the year with him, yet the silence and the uneventfulness of such a life were terrible, as terrible as every reaction must be; for every great effort, every excitement, and every happiness, has a strange way in this world of seeming to dig its own grave. The days were long, and he was "a-weary;" weary because, though he would not own to it, the body was still sick; because the nerves were jarred; because neuralgia gnawed in the stump of his left arm; because the head was too weak for study; because he had not found the secret of the power of prayer over the darkest moods of the mind; because the spirit suffered from want of occupation, want of duties, and want of strength for a holy effort after a courageous, sustained, and patient recovery.

And round one unfortunate subject his mind fretted perpetually—round the episode of the young Russian officer he had shot through the chest, and who, as he bled to death, had trusted to his enemy all his last messages for home. But let Colonel St. John rack his memory as he would, memory was silent as to the names of those two women, the young soldier's mother and his betrothed. The blow, or the brain fever, or both, had carried away past all recall of his, words which he had only heard once in the agitation of a dying hour; regret and endeavor could not now force memory to speak; indeed, she was silent because she had failed. Then, if she had failed on this point, might she not fail, or be about to fail, on more? And so a ghastly fear of mental evil came to take possession of the maimed man's mind, until he actually took his fears and his story one day to the consulting-room of a great London physician, showed him the two Russian crosses, and asked him his opinion of the case. The wise leech looked grave.

"The blow has caused it," he said; "these lapses in the memory are not uncommon after an injury to the head. It may be that that part of the memory is irretrievably injured, and that the names will never return to you; yet there is a chance that they are only as dropped stitches, and that a restoration to perfect health might help you. Don't worry over it now; there is nothing further to fear; I would tell you if there were; and some day, perhaps years hence, a hint, a word, an association, may give you the clew, and the recollection will return to you."

"When it is too late."

"Too late to be of much use to the relations of this poor boy, whose bereavement is, I fear, only too common a case at present, but not too late to be a satisfaction to your own mind. Excuse the Irish bull I am going to perpetrate, but if you were to *forget* now, it would be of real service to your *memory!*"

Then the doctor and his patient parted, and there, as far as regarded the present, or any chances of communicating with the rightful owners of the two Russian crosses, the matter dropped.

Like all recoveries from serious illness, Colonel St. John's was so wonderfully slow and long as almost to be despaired of, and the autumn of 1860 still found him so much of a sufferer, and still so deep in Dante's shadowy wood, that he had formed the resolution to travel, and to spend the winter in Rome.

There is even for the most confirmed

hypochondriac a magic in the word Rome. Artists, poets, sovereigns, statesmen, and saints, "young men and maidens," all have found, or can find, their happiness there. The skies are serene, the very soil is a palimpsest, and for every fresh pilgrim this mother of the nations has a welcome, and a home.

Of course the pilgrimage of an English Guardsman is not made after the antique pattern, in sandalled shoon, and with scallop-shell. Of course he does just as his fellows do. He takes the tidal service, and he stays a week in Paris, and dines at *cafés*, and goes to the play, and hears the new *prima donna*, and sees Madeline Brohan act, if not now in all the beauty of her beautiful youth, yet with all the finish of a perfect artist. Then he gets on to Lyons, and finds, after torrents of rain, the Rhone and Saone both swollen and turbid, and since for twenty-four hours, in this the worst climate of France, neither sun nor stars have been visible, he is glad to see the sun again at Marseilles, and also, as he watches the Indian mail disgorging its passengers, he very possibly congratulates himself that he is not now, or at any time, going out to India.

From Marseilles Colonel St. John meant to have taken a passage in one of the Messagerie boats to Civita Vecchia, but some travelling companions lured him on with them as far as Genoa, and, not being specially devoted to his own society at any time, he spent a dull day at Leghorn after parting with them, and while waiting for the packet which was not to sail till the next morning.

"Is this the best boat on the passage?" asked Colonel St. John in such Italian as he could muster, when he stood at last on the deck of a *piroscafe*, that, to say the least of it, did not look very seaworthy.

"No, the good boat was under repair; this one was *proprio* a small one, '*Ma buono*,' (but good) *si!*"

The passengers could only hope that it was so, for the sky was lowering, the wind contrary, the staple of the food was entrails and *polenta*, and the accommodation was villanous. The unhappy ones on board of her were fortunately few in number. There was one Italian officer on leave: one German naturalist, travelling cheap, and economizing in many ways (especially in his washing), and a selection of Jew, Turk, and Infidel merchants, all dirty at the present moment, and certain to be sea-sick before long.

The *San Giuseppe*, for some reason best known to herself, lay some way out in the harbor, where she was approached by little boats, and apparently she had not yet received, as Colonel St. John supposed she had, her full complement of sufferers; for here was another boat coming alongside of her, full of passengers, who excited a good deal of attention, and who were more promising travelling companions than any he had yet seen.

The sexes seemed also to be pretty equally represented in the company of ten persons who now, one by one, either came, or were lifted up the gangway.

The suite appeared first, a valet, and a maid, and a cook—all French, then a secretary (German), and a doctor with spectacles, also probably a German. Then came the personage himself, a tall middle-aged Russian gentleman, well buttoned up, and with a thick white mustache, and evidently a soldier. His invalid wife was swung up in a chair, where she looked, in her fur cloak and rugs, not unlike a gigantic black cat. She was followed by another maid whose nationality did not transpire, and then came the young lady of the party, the sick woman's only child, a tall, fair-haired, and very pretty girl of twenty. M. Anelli, the courier, brought up the rear with a fluffy little white dog, known in the family as *le Zoo-Zoo*, and there were packages innumerable, both *le gros bagage*, and the straps, dressing-cases,

medicine-chests, rugs, pillows, dispatch-boxes, tea-urns, and all the various belongings of a Russian family of distinction when travelling for the winter, and travelling for its health.

Prince Michael Zamiàtine had just spent half a year at the Baths of Lucca, and the history of all his recent travels, as given that evening to Colonel St. John, was that of a man who had often latterly changed his skies, but not his mind, or the fears which agitated his mind—fears for the days of an invalid wife.

Many waters had been tried, and many physicians consulted, but Prince Michael could not conceal from himself that his wife's cruel complaint had gained rather than lost ground, and that Anna Feodorovna was now too great a cripple to walk from one room to the other, or even to turn over the leaves of a book for herself.

Her nurse and companion seemed to be her only daughter, whose appearance on deck was delayed, either by her duties, or by the weather, for the wind seemed to try every point of the compass most likely to cover the groaning and creaking *San Giuseppe* with waves and spray.

At last when the sun broke through the clouds, the Princess Véra was summoned on deck by her father. M. Wollenhaupt, the secretary, placed a chair for her and covered her with a rug; but she soon tired of inaction, and was to be seen pacing the deck at her father's side, and laughing at her own unsteadiness.

Poor M. Wollenhaupt, who had been very unwell, except during some lucid intervals in which he had talked *Infusoria* with the German *Naturforscher* (naturalist), told the young lady that it was a very irritating spectacle to see her thus in spirits and in beauty, hungry, and laughing, when everybody else was wretched. She was to any one else a very pretty sight, very slender and fair, and exquisitely poised on small arched feet; her dark violet eyes were full of animation, for the wind seemed to excite her spirits, and, as it would not allow any hat to rest on her hair, she had tied a black lace scarf over her head, of which the ends, as well as her thick fair curls, twisted constantly across her neck. She was a pleasant companion also. Her laugh was low and rippling, but she smiled oftener than she laughed, seemed easily amused, was very quick in picking up and remembering every foreign word or name that she heard, and she was full of graceful movements, whether pacing the deck, or sitting alone on a coil of rope, as Colonel St. John once found her, stroking her *Zoo-Zoo*, and singing to herself, with a strong Tuscan accent, snatches of the *stornelli* she had learned from the peasants of Lucca: *

> Guarda che bel vestir che l'è il turchino!
> Si vestono di lui l'onde del mare,
> E se ne veste il ciel quand' è seréno
>
> (See what a fine wear is blue,
> The sea-waves put it on,
> And in fair weather so the sky is dressed.)

She sang with the quaintest little trills. Altogether, her lovely face and her pretty ways made her a wonderful sight, as the Scotch say, for "*sair een*" (sore eyes), and a great addition to the society of M. Wollenhaupt, of the unwashed *savant*, or even of the prince, her father, who, though well meaning and well informed, was somewhat heavy in discourse.

In the course of some military talk between the two soldiers, the late war was mentioned, and, from a professional point of view, the power of artillery upon earthworks. Prince Michael, of course attributing the loss of the Guardsman's left arm to his services in the Crimea, respected him accordingly. Between well-bred men, nothing could be pleasanter than such intercourse, but

* The Tuscan and Livornese peasants have a passion for these rhymes. The verses consist of three lines, and are generally sung alternately, as were those of the shepherds of Virgil. Between each verse a short *sonata* is played on the violin by one of the performers, called the *sonatore*.

once, when Colonel St. John had to offer his hand to Princess Véra, so as to steady her when making her way to the top of the companion-ladder, it did occur to him for a moment that the last time he had touched a Russian hand, it had been that of the poor young officer, when offered to him along with that melancholy little bit of black bread, and with the *papiros*. He noticed, also, a little trait of the princess which often recurred to him in after-years. Before taking the offered hand—his only one—she ceased laughing at her own glissades, and, as she glanced at his empty sleeve, she grew a shade paler, as you may see a little child do, only that, unlike a child's, her eyes expressed at the same time such a tender and respectful pity, that Henry St. John could not but read in them an exquisite homage to his misfortune.

In fact, where the girl was only in danger of losing her footing, and while her little fingers grasped his wrist tightly for one moment, the Crimean hero was in danger of losing his heart. Nay, he lost it, for in spite of the abominations of the *San Giuseppe*, he would have wished that line of coast receding instead of nearing, which now warned them of their near approach to the port of Rome.

The invalid had been brought upstairs, and she lay on the deck among her furs.

Colonel St. John, on being presented to her, found her, though wan and faded, and the skeleton, as it were, of her daughter's beauty, a woman not much over forty, crippled and helpless, yet rarely pleasant in smile and speech, young in mind, amiable, and polished, and speaking English with great correctness. Indeed, he could not but compare her perfect serenity under her crippled state with his own impatience and bad spirits, though these last, at least, were certainly mending since he had begun his travels, and he now found himself, as the train carried him up from Civita Vecchia, anticipating many pleasures and plans in which, it must be said, that his new friends played no small part.

CHAPTER XI.

ROME.

Chi Roma non vede, Roma non crede.
Proverb.

Rome and a railway station! Is it possible to have two more incongruous ideas, or rather facts, than these? And yet the railway station is a fact, and, albeit a modern one, it must be said of this building that it is an essential Roman fact. It looks grim and disorderly, and, at night, it is dark and ill-lit, though I do not know that any one has as yet been actually killed there. It also looks as if it were ashamed of itself, as it stands, huddled up on one side of the great Piazza delle Termine. The gaunt arches of the Baths of Diocletian rise up opposite, and in front is a wide piece of waste ground, covered with rough grass, broken pottery, and fragments of masonry. Near it is a barrack, full of red-legged French soldiers, a prison, and the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli, with its colossal pillars, and, as you turn out of this great ruinous square, you go down some steep streets to find yourself in another piazza, in the centre of which a Triton blows his shell, and right above you is the mass of the Barberini Palace. You go down another steep hill, and now a cardinal's carriage, and a cart drawn by buffaloes stop the way as you try to turn into the Via Due Macelli. But, once past these, you find yourself on level ground, near the foot of the Spanish steps, and in the centre of the foreign and fashionable quarter of Rome.

But climb these steps, for the sun is setting. From a hundred belfries the bells ring for Ave Maria, and there, across the town, and in a blaze of golden glory, stands the great dome of St. Pe-

ter's: and here, from this terrace of the Villa Medici, you can see the whole wonderful view, faintly pencilled Soracte far to your right, and now, below you and around you, the City and the Seven Hills.

An Italian proverb says, "Trust no tree by sunset, or by moonlight;" therefore go home, but, before you sleep, thank God that you are in Rome, and that your pilgrimage is really accomplished.

Sleeping, you will dream of the past. Heroes, Cæsars, pontiffs, and sages, all crowd into the vision, till you wake with a start, asking if you are in Rome, or if that also is but a part of the dream.

Yes, you are in Rome. Listen! the dawn is breaking now, and clang goes first one bell, and then another. First Santa Maria del Popolo, then the twin churches at the other side of the square; this next is San Jacopo degli Incurabili, and that, the last and loudest of all, is San Carlo in the Corso. You open the windows. The air is limpid, and the sky serene. Up on the Pincio the roses are blooming (it wants twenty days of Christmas), and the aloes are unfolding their green and purple sheaths; that tuft of leaves below the terrace is the true acanthus—the same which the Corinthian mourner found pushing its leaves through her basket. But what a strange noise is this! You look out into the street, and before a picture on the opposite wall (a brown Madonna, with a big tinsel crown) a brown man in brown rags, and a goatskin cloak, is piping and leaping. He plays what sounds like a Sarabande. But it is not; it is a hymn, for this is the Advent season, and he is hymning the Maid-mother, and singing to her of the joy of the coming Nativity when, at Christmas, she will give her Blessed Infant to the world. Some red-robed scholars from one of the colleges go past him, and then a girl drives kids, while carrots are being washed at the fountain. The life of the streets has begun, and you see the dogs slinking away from the garbage-heaps where, as they gnawed and quarrelled all night, they made night hideous with their howls.

It is all these squalid little details of Roman life that you see first, for the streets are squalid, the people are poor, the pavement is execrable, and the food is bad. But you forget it. You are in Rome, and, strange to say, in your own Rome; for, whereas in all foreign towns you have felt yourself a stranger, here you are at home. Here, by right of the inheritance of history, and of eighteen Christian centuries, you are at home.

You can, by following your own bent, make the place your own in another sense. Though that is true of Rome which Madame Swetchine said of life, viz., that you find exactly what you put into it, still the indefatigability of the hardiest sight-seer is soon exhausted here. "Do not show me too much; let me alone—only let me live!" you cry. And gradually, as the power of the place steals over a man, it takes possession of him, it leads him captive: and, as he sits upon the ground "to hear sad stories of the deaths of kings," ambition and sorrow are both deadened, he is filled with a vague, delicious joy, for this dust which speaks of immortality yet reconciles him to obscurity, these temples call him to prayer, and they also promise him rest.

Study and pain had formed Colonel St. John to appreciate all these impressions, and every day brought him new pleasures, though it must be owned that he owed many of them to the Zamiàtines. He had taken rooms in the same hotel (the "Russie," at the end of the Babuino), and in their *salon* he always found pleasant company, and a welcome. And there of evenings he sucked in, with the Roman air, a new element in his existence—Love.

Unsuspected at first came this power, but at last the tenant proclaimed himself.

It was on the 16th of January, the vigil of the Feast of the Guardian Angel, that Colonel St. John first became aware of it.

He had gone after dinner to inquire for Princess Anna Feodorovna, but, instead of hearing the cheerful "*Entrez!*" by which his knock was generally answered, the door was gently opened by Véra in person.

"Mamma is alone, and too suffering to-night to see any one," she whispered; "but come to-morrow, when she hopes to be better. It is my *fête*, but we have not invited any one else."

As she spoke she held out a hand, which Colonel St. John felt that he would have given the world to have put to his lips, only the sweet pale face, with its background of Rhine-wine gold, looked up into his own with such innocent eyes, that he feared to startle her, or, by anticipating the right and happy moment, perhaps offend her.

He came the next evening, and found the invalid better, and able to be amused by her daughter's toilet, when Véra, who was going with her father to a ball at one of the embassies, came in to show herself to her mother.

Devoid of all coquetry as she was, I still think that Véra had, as most beautiful women have had, a great pleasure in her own beauty, and no little pleasure, as becomes a young woman, in dress. To-night she was lovely. In some shining white stuff, with a rose-wreath that set off her fairness, her bare neck and arms made her look even younger than she generally did. She was now nearly twenty-two years of age, tall, and looking taller than her height from the smallness of her bones, and because, as is often the case with Russian women, the lines of the neck, arms, and shoulders, were all of extraordinary fineness and purity.

She bent down to kiss her mother.

"See, your Angelo Custode (since he and I have the same *fête*) is here," she said, smiling, and then, pulling out the long wing-like sleeves that hung behind her arms, she spread out what really looked like an angel's pinions, as she stooped her fair head to kiss over and over again her mother's wan cheeks.

"*Felice notte, bel' uccell' di Dio.*"* said the *donna*, who, coming in with a *scaldino*† for the princess's feet, saw the attitude, and, with the true Italian instinct for beauty, caught its meaning. "Good-night, my bird," repeated the mother; and then, when Colonel St. John had wished her a pleasant evening, the girl went off to her ball, and the soldier formed the wise resolution to go for the future more into society.

He went, but it was not altogether a pure gain or pleasure to him, for of course the princess made conquests, and of course he was jealous of her admirers, especially so of those who talked to her in her own, to him, unknown tongue, and, therefore, chiefly so of a certain Prince Serge Donskoï, a young man who had many centuries of ancestors, many accomplishments, some vices, and an empty purse, and who, because he had all these, and very good taste into the bargain, paid marked attention to Prince Michael Zamiàtine's only child.

Sergei Martinovitch was also an only child, now a good-looking man of twenty-four years of age, shrewd, well-bred, accomplished, and a scamp, better known in other countries than his own, more often seen at the Jockey Club, or at the *Cercle* at Baden-Baden, than in the gloomy woods which surround his paternal estate and castle of Sparski. He fluttered from capital to capital, and the only check which was ever imposed on his pleasures was by the bad state of his finances, at present at so low an ebb that his *intendant* barely sent him money enough to pay for his gloves and cigarettes, and for the rent of a room on the second floor of the Hôtel d'Angleterre.

* "A happy night to you, beautiful bird of God," i.e., Angel.

† Box full of hot embers.

He cursed his *intendant* there heartily one day to a friend, as heartily as if the maledictions could have been converted into rubles.

"The German Jew!" he said; "if it were not for the trouble of the thing, it would be better to manage my affairs myself as my father did. You see it was very simple in his days. He kept his money in a drawer, and sometimes it was full, sometimes it was empty."

"What filled it again?" asked the friend, to whose Western ideas, founded on a system of banking, this seemed a peculiar method of dealing with one's worldly goods.

"*Le sais-je moi?*" (Do I know?) "Some lucky thing—a debt recovered, an arrear paid up, some plate melted down, or a wood-cut, filled the cabinet drawers again. Oh, then we were very cheerful. My father had a band (as good as Prince C——'s); all the singers were Little Russians, and the *maestro di capello* was an Italian. Then we had a private theatre, with not a bad company, and gave some French pieces. All that was down-stairs, I beg you to observe: up-stairs my poor dear mother was at her devotions. I seldom went up-stairs myself; the smell of sanctity, of oil-lamps, incense, tea, and lemons, not to speak of the *bouquet* of the *popes*,* nuns, and other pious persons, was discouraging to me. I had my horses—in short, it was all very amusing; but only so long as the money lasted. I shall never forget one day when they came to ask my father for some money. He was reading over the playbill of the evening, but something had to be paid for. Ah! the porter's boots, I recollect now, he had been slipshod for a month. My father got up and took snuff—(he snuffed enormously, and so did my mother, and I fancy it was the only point they had in common)—he grumbled, and then went to open the drawer. *Peste!* it was empty, but three paper rubles, and some kopecks! What a humor he was in! I thought it best to change the air, so went abroad that spring. Well, well! life is full of these variations. One wins and laughs; one loses and one laughs all the same."

Of Prince Serge's philosophy it must be said that it required, however, constant amusement and frequent change of scene to make it do all that was required of it. Yet he was by no means an empty-headed person: he was more than an average good musician, and wrote very neat verses in French and Russian, a garland of which he laid this Christmas at Princess Véra's feet. He danced well, and to Colonel St. John's rising jealousy it was any thing but pleasing to see him valse with the princess: but other people admired them very much, and said, when Véra's delicate profile and golden head stood out in front of his clear-cut features and black curly hair, that they were like a prince and princess on a medal, and that they would one day make a very handsome couple.

At a ball the young Russian certainly seemed master of the situation, but of an afternoon Colonel St. John had his revenge; for once and once only did Serge Martinovitch accompany the Zamiàtines on one of their long drives into the Campagna. They had gone out by the Porta Salara to Nero's Villa. But alas! the exquisite circle of the hills, the opening of the Piombino Valley, the deep current of the river, the bluffs of rocks which here overhang the Tiber on its farther side, even the green mounds themselves which alone remain to show where the tyrant's villa stood, all these things, like the tragic story of his murder, as well as the exquisite beauty of the sunlight, the limpid air, and the hollow rustle of the wind-swept reeds, these were one and all thrown away upon the young barbarian. He was horribly bored, sat on a stone, and hummed a *Tsardas* tune, and, when he found himself again within the walls of Rome, he

* Priests.

said, confidentially, to Princess Véra: "Ah! if you only knew how I detest the fields."

She laughed, and said archly: "I am so sorry, and it is a pity that there should be so many of them here."

CHAPTER XII.

THE VILLA.

As tu remarqué quelle extraordinaire quantité de femmes singulières le Nord envoit à l'Occident. Pour la plupart elles sont d'origine Slave, et presques toutes princesses. Elles ont une teinture de toutes choses.—A. Achard.

Colonel St. John, who had not the same antipathy, accompanied the Zamiàtines on many an afternoon, to bath and villa, to tombs as buried as are the ashes they were once meant to cover, to galleries, and to the *scavi* (excavations), where what we call "old Rome" is seen to stand above the vestiges of an older Rome, now hidden some twenty feet under-ground. Michael Zamiàtine's education had not been a classical one, and he was glad to have a companion who could always disentangle his ideas for him, read a Latin inscription (even when there were abbreviations in it), and who could always tell a Flavian emperor from a Julian one.

Véra's interest was perhaps greater in Christian than in classical remains, but music was a taste which the whole party had in common, though it was one which the invalid princess, Anna Feodorovna, could only gratify in private, either in her own rooms, or in the *salon* of a fellow countrywoman, who possessed in Rome a villa of unrivalled beauty.

There, where the Aqueducts, just about to enter the city, most nearly converge, and looking across the Campagna —which their arches only seem able to span—toward Albano and the hills, stands the villa B——. Embosomed in olive and in ilex trees, it is rich in hoar cypresses, in urns, and in those pathetic fragments of old workmanship which an undergrowth of violets and acanthi half hides and half reveals. This villa enjoys a beautiful site, and nowhere, perhaps, could you have seen collected at that time a more gifted or a more polished society. Six or seven women, and perhaps more than double that number of men of all nations, composed the circle. "Gossip parlance" found little place here where art, literature, and religion, were the favorite themes, where music was their favorite occupation, and where, by birth or learning, beauty, elegance, or wit, a footing of equality was established among all its members.

On Colonel Henry St. John the effect was intoxicating. Had he been a younger man he might have been spoilt by the ease with which he was allowed to make his way in it, but no man had had more early the habits of good society; and to a mind and body which had longed for interest and for change, nothing could have been so charming as was the zest which genius can throw into conversation, which talent adds to life, and which good breeding adds alike to talent and to every little detail.

In Anna Feodorovna, who here, in the society most congenial to her, put forth all her powers, he saw intellect triumph over bodily pains; he saw around him intercourse without stiffness and without display; he heard religion spoken of as the cardinal interest, with frankness, and with warmth: even Serge Donskoï, who was a nephew of the hostess, could discourse rare music on his violin, while at the piano Véra was always enchanting, whether accompanying him through some sonata, or playing those strange compositions of Chopin's, by which a Pole has again conquered Russia, or wandering along through Schubert's melodies—melodies which, by their freshness, their unexpected graces, their tuneful sweetness, and their pensiveness without gloom, were, perhaps, the apt-

est illustrations of her own happy and unspoilt nature.

There was place in this society for an abundant study of character, since many nationalities, and more than one creed, were represented in it, but the character of Véra Zamiàtine came to engross all the attention of the English soldier, as he grew to love the girl with all his tenderness and all his strength. He asked himself if this preoccupation were truly love, or whether it was not that in a small society the equilibrium of the taste and of the reason is apt to be lost. Perhaps, too, his former *ennui*, and his morbid longing for change, had made this new companionship so engrossing to him. There was some truth in both these arguments, but, even after due allowance had been made for such causes, Véra's undeniable charm remained.

With more intelligence than intellect, with the manners of the most cultivated society in Continental Europe, and with a good deal of reserve, she had also a very marked individuality of her own. There was not a trace of self-will, that brand which even in early life makes itself patent, as if it was intended to warn us off from the coarse and inferior nature of which it is too often the sign: in Véra, on the contrary, a low harmonious voice seemed to answer for her real docility; no heat of passion, no trouble of soul, no vulgar rivality, and no broken friendship, had ever come to ruffle her spirit, or that index to her spirit—her face. Pure, passionless, and naturally pensive, she was well-trained to duty: though formed by society, she was loyal to home, and her faith would prove her shield in the battle of life, as she was inwardly, unaffectedly, and unalterably devout.

"Yes, that is a very rare type," said old M. Des Lormes, one day, as he saw his favorite leave her place at the piano to supply some small want of Princess Zamiàtine's; "one must be *Slave*," he added, as he strolled out into the garden, "to combine such very curious and dissimilar qualities as these Russian ladies often do. See," he continued, extending his hand in the direction of the villa —"see what peculiar women are the four whom we left there just now."

"Very puzzling, from their cosmopolitanism," replied the Italian whom he addressed.

"I admit that, but it is not the less true that their nature is as cosmopolitan, or more so, than has been their training. I notice it in the men as well as in the women. These people are Germans in their intellects, Italian in their impulsive passions, and Northern in their pathos, while they are as fond of society, and as fitted for it, as any Parisian of the best of us; they are as supple as Greeks, and truly Oriental in their love of magnificence, as well as in their power of both inflicting and enduring cruelties with something very like indifference. No people suffer so much from *ennui*, and yet none have more resources: their aptitude for languages and their love of music are proverbial, yet they have a passion for all games of hazard. The upper classes seem to me to have a nervous impressionability of the most painful and delicate sort, while along with all this, and with all the imperiousness of the *boyars* from whom they spring, they have a great deal of the stolid endurance of the serfs whom they alternately feed or beat, and at whose breasts they are suckled."

Monsieur Des Lormes sat meditating on a broken column over his own analysis, and then took his way back into the city, smiling to himself once as he went at the name which, in Rome, that city of nicknames, had been assigned to the Princess Véra. The Italians simply called her "*la distinta*," that is, the rare, or the distinguished one.

Was this "*distinta*" to be wooed and won at all? would she marry Prince Serge? and would she refuse an English

suitor? were all questions which now agitated Colonel St. John's mind. I must beg the reader to take for granted the reasoning by which he had brought himself to suppose that Lord Kendal would ever assist his marriage with a foreigner; at all events he had so convinced himself, and he now only watched and waited for one sign of response to his passion. He saw that Véra was reserved, modest, and calm, and he argued, and not incorrectly, that this very reserve, in a nature so fitted to love and be loved, was symptomatic of a great power and capability of feeling, could he only have once the power of arousing it. As yet no one had troubled these waters, and their quiet and pellucid depths reflected only the sky.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF.

> I asked her, "Lassie, will ye gang
> To see the carse o' Gowrie?"
>
> *Scotch Song.*

The reader may probably have been asking himself whether it be possible that, during all this intercourse with a Russian family, the subject of the Russian relics from Inkermann had remained in abeyance in Colonel St. John's mind.

It had very nearly done so, and that from no heartlessness on the part of the English officer, on whose mind it had lain as a weight for so long; but as it had become to him at one time the object of an almost monomaniacal preoccupation, so it was now only natural that that feeling, like any other form of hypochondria, should fade before new and wholesome interests. What had remained to him was a sincere regret founded on the impossibility of now recalling the message of the dying Russian—a regret rendered all the more poignant, because here, through these new friends of his, a golden opportunity had at last offered itself for transmitting such a message to Russia, along with the long-missing mementoes of a soldier's dying hour.

The lesion in Colonel St. John's memory rendering this impossible, it will be understood that he hardly cared to tell his tale to the Zamiàtines, uselessly painful story as it was, and one without an end, for why should he speak of that sad accident, and sadder hour, when he had neither explanation nor expiation to offer, to the boy's family? Whenever the subject rose unbidden to his mind he generally banished it, and he only once alluded to it in a *tête-à-tête* with Véra's mother. How much or how little of it she might have learned from him, and how much or how little she might then have been able to assist his memory by questions as to age, appearance, or uniform of his victim, had they not been interrupted by the announcement of visitors, I know not, but apparently Anna Feodorovna had not had her attention deeply arrested by it, as she never recurred to it, and Colonel St. John naturally did not care to press it on her attention.

He now waited daily for a chance of disclosing his love to Véra, and yet none such seemed to offer. Except at a ball, he never saw her alone; she had ears and eyes in daily life for nothing but her mother's health; the announcement that in a few more days he must leave Rome had not had power to melt her; and in Princess Anna's *salon*, when conversation was not going on, Serge Donskoï was apt to be in possession at once of the piano and of her daughter's attention.

On the day before he left Rome, the friends went together to see the view from San Pietro in Montorio, and, while the invalid remained in the carriage, Colonel St. John did suddenly find himself alone with Véra, who had walked to the edge of the terrace.

"Did I not tell you that in my capacity of guide I had kept the best sight till the last?" he asked her.

"It is indeed the best," she replied, as she bent down over the Trasteverine gardens at her feet, and then looked up and around on that amazing panorama. In the delicious atmosphere of an April day every object was clear—the distant waves that broke upon the Ostian beach, the river taking its way through the city, and, blue and far, the wonderful outlines of the hills.

"It *is* the best, and now I wish that is was not the last," she added; "but I thank you for bringing me here; I shall never forget this."

"No: and here comes in my selfishness, my plan and wish to be remembered along with it."

"Oh! can you doubt that?" answered Véra, with a sunny frankness that did not augur well for any response to his tender confession. "It is the worst of having been so happy here, and of having made so many good friends, that one must leave it all, though, by-the-way, it is actually you, Colonel St. John, who are leaving us; must you really go to-morrow, or is there no *rimedio*, as the Romans say?"

"None whatever, I fear; you know England expects every man to do his duty."

"I pity you for having to return to England in early spring; besides, I do not like my friends to be in a country I have never seen."

"But some day you will see it. Will you come and try to like it? Would you not try to do so?" He dared not yet add, "for my sake."

"Don't think me rude, but do you know we have travelled so much ever since I was a child, that I never think about travels, only about living at home, if we could."

"Could not England, then, become a home?"

"Never, I fear; for, you know, it is only on mamma's account that we move about so much, and that climate would never do. One month of the sea-fogs would kill her. I sometimes wonder if I shall ever go back to Russia."

"Are you so very national and patriotic?"

"Very patriotic, but not national, for I have lived there too little, only during the three years of the war in the Crimea did we make any long stay there, and now mamma is so much more suffering that I don't think it will be attempted. If the baths of Ischia answer for her, we may go there year after year, and winter somewhere else, I suppose. I should like to come back here better than any thing else, and you know we are to drink at Trevi to-night, so you must accompany us, and drink the water too, and that will insure your return here as well;" and Véra, as she said this, reseated herself in her mother's carriage, and was soon on her way back to their hotel.

In all this pleasant, good-humored talk about their future plans, what promise was there of response to Henry St. John's passion?

History repeats itself, and Véra, when Alexis took leave of her six years ago, had not been more innocent of love than she was at this moment.

Colonel St. John felt that he had nothing but a friend's place in her mind, and after this conversation he settled that he had better not risk even that place by a formal proposal. The Zamiàtines, perhaps, had other plans for their daughter—in short, the day was spent and gone, and nothing was said or done by him, and when evening came he had convinced himself that he must bid farewell to his hopes, and keep silence.

Of the group round the fountain of Trevi, Véra was the most gay and hopeful, because she was the one most indifferent to the present parting. She knelt down and filled her hands, laughing as she wetted her pretty face in the process, and nodded to the collection of stone divinities who preside over the basin, and who looked gigantic in the gloomy shadows of the little moonlit

square. She then insisted on filling a cup for her mother, and on taking it to the carriage herself.

"Drink to our coming back next winter, *doushenka moja*," she said; and Anna Feodorovna sipped out of the cup, and then lay back on her pillows, thinking rather of the "pure immortal streams" which rise in a more Eternal City, where men thirst no more.

"Give, O my God!" she murmured —"give to me and to my child to drink of the Water of Life, where in Thy Supreme repose all Thy saints rest."

Véra, meantime, had gone back to the fountain: she was alone, and Colonel St. John, had he not been already convinced of her indifference, must have been so now, for she had hardly spoken to him since they had assembled round the fountain. His eyes, on the contrary, never left her, and the last souvenir he carried away of Rome was that of Véra standing alone, and all in white, upon the basin's rim, and then stooping to wet her fingers, as she made the sign of the Cross on her own lips, breast, forehead, and eyes, and then walked away.

To him she looked, in her youth, purity, and whiteness, like the Angel of the Healing Pool.

Vain fool that he had been to hope to win and wear her! Which of the pilgrims at Bethesda had ever had the presumption to bid its Angel linger? The world and sick men were bettered each time that the pool was stirred by its white wings or whiter feet; but was not the Angel always free?

In May the Zamiàtines left Rome for the baths of Ischia; but they were summoned thence in September by news from Russia. Prince Michael, so long out of favor at the court of Nicholas, had been appointed chamberlain to the wife of the Emperor Alexander, and was obliged to present himself at St. Petersburg without delay. His wife and daughter followed slowly; and St. Petersburg was reached by them at last. Nothing could exceed the satisfaction of the prince; but, almost before the congratulations of his friends had come to an end, Anna Feodorovna took her flight from this northern Venice to a country where "there is no more sea."

PART III.

IN WHICH THE WHEEL IS SEEN STILL TO BE TURNING.

LA PAUVRE BRETONNE.

Je croyais aimer mes bruyères,
Je croyais aimer ma patrie,
Je croyais aimer mes clairières,
Mes rochers, vallons et forêts.
Je croyais, moi pauvre Bretonne,
Aimer, d'un amour éternel,
Du hameau la Sainte Madonne,
Blanche et pure image du ciel.
Ce que j'aimai sur terre,
bis. { C'était ton âme fière;
C'était le feu de ton regard.
Pour ta pauvre compagne,
Non plus de campagne;
Non plus de Bretagne,
À ton regard.

French Peasant's Song.

CHAPTER XIV.

A LONDON SEASON.

Oh! to be in England
Now that April's there!

BROWNING.

AND oh! to be in England when 'tis May! if the goddess will but wear her diviner aspect, and if the east wind will not combine with the German bands, the exorbitant hotel charges, and the street repairs, to put intelligent foreigners into a frenzy, and to disgust even the most patriotic of Britons.

Oh! to be in England when 'tis May! if it be but such a May as the Zamiàtines found smiling over London, when Prince Michael and his daughter came to take up their quarters at Claridge's Hotel, about three weeks after the Exhibition of 1862 had been opened. Provisionally opened, let us say, when one remembers the "chaos-come-again" that reigned in many parts of that great brick building, of which the native hideousness was redeemed by its fine picture-galleries, rather than by any happy arrangement of its very multifarious contents.

Prince Michael did his duty, so he visited the Exhibition; he always did his duty, so he took his daughter to see it, but Véra, in wandering about it, soon grew very tired. A winter at Pau had but ill succeeded in recovering her strength, for a marsh-fever in the spring before had followed on the shock of her mother's death, and had left her nerveless and spiritless. They were now on their way home to their capital, taking London and the Exhibition by the way, because amusement and change had been prescribed for the princess, and because Michael Zamiàtine's mind had been fired by an account of the cannon on view there.

He went again and again to examine the Armstrong guns, and all the implements of war so strangely jumbled up

with all the arts of peace. Véra went to see the modern Dresden china, and then sat down again near her father, in a place where she could escape a little from the loud hammering of the work-people, which still reverberated unpleasantly through many parts of the nave. She was fortunate in escaping what it once was her biographer's fate to encounter under similar circumstances, viz., a competitive trial of drums in the Exposition of 1867; but she felt very weary, particularly of the cannons, and of the pickle-trophy of immortal memory, which challenged her admiration at a little distance. Crowds of sight-seers passed and repassed her, giving that sense of loneliness which is only needed to convert bodily fatigue at any moment into bad spirits, when she was suddenly descried, and as suddenly greeted, by Colonel St. John. He was alone, and as much surprised as she could be herself at the unexpected *rencontre*.

"I had no idea you were in London," he exclaimed—and then the usual congratulations were exchanged—and how long was it since they had met? More than two years now. An inquiry for Princess Zamiàtine's health was on Colonel St. John's lips; but a glance at Véra's black dress, and something in her face, warned him not to speak of her mother. In the course of a ten-minutes' conversation with the girl he learned, however, from her lips the story of her bereavement, of her father's recent appointment to a post at court, of their future home in St. Petersburg, and of their present plans for travel and change. He looked at Véra while she was speaking, and then he asked himself whether the Véra of his heart and memory had not turned out the real Véra of flesh and blood, or whether it was that the princess herself was really changed. She was changed, and he began to feel it. Altered undoubtedly, but not less winning and graceful. There was the same glittering hair, only she wore it differently, and the same lithe figure, only from her mourning dress she looked both taller and thinner; the eyes were as large and as childlike, as blue still as violets, but they were graver, so that the colorless sweet face had got a plaintiveness about it which was quite new. When her father began to talk, he had time to watch her. How charming she was! how trustful, and serious, and gracious her manner was! and how attentive, even though all her attitudes were languid! and then how pretty the voice was with which she spoke — dwelling slightly on all the vowels, and giving to French and English alike, as she pronounced them, the coloring of her native speech! When she smiled, her mouth had the sweetest of curves over the most pearly of teeth; and then how patient and intelligent she was, for the appearance of a military acquaintance had unfortunately rekindled all her father's ardor about the Armstrong guns, and the inspection of them had to be begun all over again at the beginning.

During this *da capo*, Véra had to hear much of range, and charge, and vent-piece of rifled chambers, bore, grooves, and trajectory, of siege-guns and mortars, and of certain French field-pieces, "*de douze*," about which Prince Michael had some theories of his own—theories which he only required a listener to make him produce at a moment's notice. Véra knew that the exposition of these ideas was always a lengthy process, so she sat down again beside him, planting her little camp-stool among these instruments of death, and listening gently, for she was too well-bred to seem bored, but yet looking, with her white face, and in her black dress which touched the big piles of shot, like the Iphigenia of war. Her hands lay in her lap, and she was quite silent. Was she thinking of the old house in Moscow, of the evening sunlight on the big brass gun that had once filled up the garden-

terrace there, and of that other spring day, when a boy-lover had been beside her, and when life too had been in its spring?

And the war-maimed man near her now! What did he think of? He thought simply where, when, and how, was he to see her again? But that was not what he said. As they walked away at last down the nave, and he took her out to her carriage, he asked her only, "Have you much gayety in prospect?"—a deadly stupid and unidealized question to have put to her, as any reader will at once say. But let your meeting with the lady of your affections be as inwardly emotional as it may, you must say something, and, if that meeting takes place in the middle of the London season, and in a place of public entertainment, you can hardly avoid asking her at least one deplorably formal question. Véra answered that they had been very quiet, had dined at their embassy, and been three times to the opera, but that she was going to-morrow to a garden-party at the Duchess of J——'s.

"Where I may hope to meet you."

Then they separated; Véra hoping that it would not rain to-morrow; and certainly the hope of meeting her pleasant friend of Roman memories gave more zest to her anticipations than she could have supposed.

"How one likes any one one has ever met in Rome!" she said to her father at dinner.

"Rome? Ah! yes, Rome; a charming town. But for the commissariat, Rome would be a perfectly delightful winter residence, but that I must say is infamous, and I cannot manage to live on an orange, a little shade, and a great deal of enthusiasm in the way you can do, *ma fille*. That Colonel St. John is a remarkably clever man; in our country that man would be employed. I call that a solidly well-informed man. Now, his appreciation to-day of my ideas about that small French field-piece was quite remarkable; he says there are some models at a museum belonging to his club that will interest me; I shall certainly go with him to see them."

O Cupid! how many fathers, and possible fathers-in-law, do you not daily deceive in this barefaced way?

The weather, which might have turned Princess Véra's *fête* into the most dreary of solemnities, happened to be propitious, and the afternoon was one on which the English climate and English suburban scenery show to most advantage. There was a general flush and abundance of greenery, doubly pleasant to the eye when it is set off, as it was here, by white and rosy blossoms, hung with tassels of lilac and laburnum, and crowned with spires of horse-chestnut flowers. The turf was velvety, sunny, and smooth, and gay groups clustered about it, sitting under the shade of the trees, or dropping out of sight where the beautiful lawn sloped away to the south.

It appeared that Princess Véra Zamiàtine was to be the fashion this season. She had come to London ten days ago, knowing, at the outside, ten people in it; to-day she was universally courted and made much of.

Colonel St. John saw her admired, and heard her praised, and if he never joined in the chorus it was because a voice in the depth of his own heart said but too loudly how lovely, fair, and unspoilt she was.

About six o'clock he found himself seized upon by Lady Mortlake.

"Oh! Colonel St. John, is there a hope of finding you disengaged, and able to dine with us on Saturday? I hope we may be able to persuade you. It is to meet these Russians; you know them, I think?"

"Yes, they are old Roman friends of mine. It is very kind of you, Lady Mortlake; and I shall be delighted to have the honor."

"On Saturday, then, and at eight. We are rather punctual people, you know."

"I know you are. How is Lord Mortlake's gout?"

"Pretty well just now, thanks. How well that girl dresses, to be sure!" (putting up her eye-glass as she spoke, to inspect Véra, who was standing on the grassy bank above her).

"Yes; and so simply."

"Now, that is so like a man to say that! Why, that white dress has cost money untold."

"Has it? So much the better for the milliner; it could not be better for the wearer."

"No; it really could not. We all look so dowdy beside her."

The toilet in question was one of those marvellous constructions of white muslin, lace, and needlework, which only Paris can produce, and which one must almost be a rich man's only child to have a right to wear. Véra's appearance in it to-day made her an object of envy to many, and all combinations of colors and stripes among the company did, as Lady Mortlake expressed it, seem dowdy beside her spotless freshness. Her maid had christened it "*la robe de bébé.*" *

The garden-party, after going off much as all such parties do, was over; but Colonel St. John, now more love-smitten than ever, had the dinner at Lord Mortlake's to look forward to.

It also was successful when it came.

The host took, as it happened, his pretty foreign guest to dinner, but Colonel St. John found himself on her other side, making plans for her amusement in London, which were promising for the future, and also pleasant to Lord Mortlake in the mean time. His lordship was a little—no, not a little—deaf on one side (that on which the princess was seated), and he had therefore foreseen himself obliged to choose between her silvery conversation and the very excellent dinner before him. Colonel St. John's happy and opportune fluency it was which now allowed him to devote himself to the latter, and no doubt it was pleasanter so, both for the young people and for Lord Mortlake, though perhaps it was wrong, for his lordship had the gout the next day; and I am told that he kept his room for a week. He said that "it was the strawberries," and they *are* bad for the gout.

Thanks to some of the arrangements made that evening, their brief London season was full of amusement for the Zamiàtines. Military and feminine taste were alike gratified by the way in which Colonel St. John had catered for them; the military element, perhaps, predominating, as was unavoidable. Prince Michael made a business of it. He visited every barrack in and near London (and some very nasty ones he saw), and his daughter was taken to see the Guard mounting at St. James's, where she beheld, with her bodily eyes, the men, and the successors of the men, who twice in thin red line had met and vanquished the flower of the Russian infantry. Owing to his recent inspection of their barracks, Prince Michael Zamiàtine was recognized by some of the men, and soldiers with Crimean medals on their breasts grinned on seeing their old enemy "The Rooshians" appear among them in the novel shape of one bluff old gentleman with a thick white mustache, and one young girl in a black gauzy dress, and with a face, as some one had said, "like a guelder rose."

Then there was a day in Windsor Forest; and two hot hours at the Royal Academy, and more of what Véra laughingly called her "*Kátorga,*" * at the Exhibition, and even a review at Aldershott, where the black peaty dust filled her mouth and eyes, and where they lunched in a hut in the South Camp, so pretty and so luxuriously fitted up as not even to suggest the mimicry of campaigning life, and where, through its open windows, and its pink fluttering curtains, you saw the rolling, heathy

* "The baby's frock."

* Hard labor, in the penal sense of the word.

country, and the blue misty horizon, and heard the roll of the drums, and the bands thundering together in "God save the Queen;" and then home by train, at express speed, to dinner at the embassy in Chesham Place, and later to a reception at X—— House.

"You don't know how tired I am," Véra said, when she met Colonel St. John there; and then she detailed her experiences while he found a chair for her. "How very pretty this is," she continued, for the great saloon was full of exotics, and the outer vestibule had been turned into a miniature palm-grove. "It looks like a fairy island in the South Seas," she said.

"Will you not go up-stairs, then, and see the natives?" he asked, and they began to mount the staircase, which, from a double spring, ascends to the gallery and the reception-rooms above.

Princess Véra, in white, with half of her hair on her shoulders, and with no ornaments but her pearls, was one of the most remarkable people in the company.

"That's the Russian beauty, there on the stair," said somebody; "and the man beside her is the Colonel St. John who lost his arm in the Crimea," said somebody else, and so on, with various comments on her appearance. Her comment was: "Every London party is like the other; the crowd is as great in a palace like this as it is in a small house; and the women have worse dresses and prettier faces than any other people in the world."

If Colonel St. John had not been an Englishman, he might have seized this opportunity of telling her, with a bow, that she combined both beauties of dress and person, but such speeches were not in his line. He was trying to hide from himself and from others that he was very much in love, and that with a woman twenty years younger than himself, and who, probably, only thought of him as an old friend of her mother's, and only liked him for her sake. If ever a man had felt inclined to do like Ponce de Léon,* and go off to the antipodes in search of that "*Fontaine de Jouvence*" which was fabled to give a man back his youth, Colonel St. John had felt ready during the last fortnight to do so. Alas for the nineteenth century and its heroes! no broth of Medea and no distant fountain can even promise them help, and my hero could only debate with himself whether to give up the pursuit, or even now "to put it to the touch," "to lose, or venture all."

He debated this with himself while he stood by Princess Véra's side, and assisted her curiosity as to the names of certain owners of lovely faces and ugly dresses, which she had picked out among the crowd.

"What is the matter?" asked her father, as the music, which had been playing, suddenly stopped.

"Royalty, I suppose," was the answer. And suddenly their host shot past them, and ran down-stairs, and, in another second, the band striking up the national anthem, a royal party, English and foreign, entered the saloon. Then the crowd altered its direction, and followed these distinguished personages, when they got up-stairs, into the great gallery, and the space where the Zamiàtines were sitting was left comparatively deserted.

Colonel St. John was then, by an accident, saved, as he thought, from risking his fate on a point-blank question and answer. His eyes fell on a couple seated behind one of the pillars. They were a boy and girl, so absorbed in each other's society as to be oblivious of the fact that the recession of the public into the gallery and supper-room had left them rather prominently alone. They were whispering, smiling, and coloring; they were as fair as cherubs, as like as two cherries.

* The situation of the "Fontaine de Jouvence, cui fit rajovenir la gent" is uncertain. It was a matter of popular belief in the thirteenth century, and in the sixteenth Ponce de Léon sailed with two ships in search of it. He was never heard of again

They were obviously cousins, and were both under nineteen years of age. Both were slender, both had unclouded eyes, young lips, and young voices. Véra, noticing them also, smiled.

"They look like the prince and princess of my fairy island," she said. "What a pity your natives will come and disturb them!"

"Yes, they are really two pretty children. How old do you suppose our young friends to be?"

"Seventeen or eighteen, I suppose; and, if they are not happy now, when will they ever be?"

"Then you should say that theirs was the right age for that sort of thing—for making love, or having it made to you?"

Véra, without the slightest idea of the *arrière pensée* in this question, answered, and with the greatest promptitude, that she did think so, and her companion at first rejoined not a word, only, two minntes after, he said, with a grave, good-natured smile, which betrayed no annoyance, "Well, no matter. You are right, I have no doubt: and Eros, we should remember, was a very little boy." And then Véra laughed, and there the conversation ended.

Colonel St. John, as he lighted his cigar, and walked home through the stable-yard, said to himself, "Once for being poor, and once for being old, ought to be enough for any fellow who is not an even greater ass than myself. But, I must say, Princess Véra, you were very cutting, though you could not know, of course, that you had to do with such an elderly idiot." And then, wise or foolish, he went to bed, and dreamed there of a coronation, where Véra was queen, but where the king was the small boy-lover they had just seen at X—— House.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DAY AFTER THE FAIR.

How could I tell I should love thee to-day,
Whom *that* day I held not dear?
How could I tell I should love thee away,
When I did not love thee anear?

JEAN INGELOW.

DELIGHTFULLY unconscious of any mistake on her part was the smiling Princess Véra when they next met, which they did three days after at a dinner at Richmond. During those three days she had missed Colonel St. John, and had begun to discover that his society was not only very essential to her happiness, but that life with his presence was very different from what it had been ever since her mother's death, when its oppressive loneliness had broken down her health and nerves. To-day she was to make a further discovery; certainly, however, not the one that she had either hurt or rebuffed her friend. Of that Colonel St. John was too much master of himself to give any sign. He was only a little vexed, he said, at the *contre-temps* of a thunder-storm, but the rain cleared off at last, and, as they drove back into town by Roehampton, Barnes, and Fulham, even this ceased to be a matter for regret. It was late, and the evening was one of those which can only be enjoyed after rain in summer-time, and which out of England cannot be known. Great white pillowy clouds were packing away in the north, and the masses of the ancestral trees were thrown into alternate shadow and splendor, as they caught, or missed, the lingering brightness in the west. The leaves were glistening, and all the woods were fragrant, and the deer stirred among the deep ferns, as they bowled along over the smooth gravel. Later still, and as evening almost deepened into night, marvellous odors of gardens began to come to them across low brick walls, where the first June roses were replacing the Wisteria chains, where hops and clematis scrambled, and where

the guelder roses tossed their creamy heads, still heavy with the summer shower. And, before they reached London, a few stars began to twinkle in the sky, and to throw trembling reflections into the river, where the black barges were slowly tacking up, helped by the rising tide.

Véra sat very silent: her heart was troubled and yet glad. With a perfectly pleasant and trusted companion at her side, and in the perfumed quiet of that night in June, what wonder then that it had stirred at last; that the Russian girl grew to love the Englishman and the English country; that she longed to grasp at happiness, as a baby holds out its hands for all the flowers that it may pass? A shooting-star glittered just then in the sky: Véra remembered the superstition that the wish formed during the falling of a star is granted, and clasping her hands on her lap, she raised her eyes, and whispered her wish—"His love."

Then the star fell, and the carriage turned off the bridge into the Fulham lanes, and they were soon among the streets and shops, and all the London din.

This was on Thursday night. Friday was a wet and an uneventful day, till at dinner Michael Zamiàtine suddenly said something of "Tuesday, when we go down to Folkestone."

"Tuesday!" ejaculated Véra, setting down the glass she had at her lips.

"Yes, I see the hour suits better on Wednesday for the tidal boat; but we may as well sleep at Folkestone."

And very little dinner did Véra eat after this piece of information, and very little did she enjoy her box at the opera to hear *Fidelio*. Now and then the tender pathos and perfect finish of a great actress choked her, and stirred in the girl all that power of possible devotion which was the substratum of her character. Like Madame Swetchine, Véra could always say, that while she loved God with all her strength, her heart had still much love to give away, without taking any thing from Him, and, poor girl, a vista had just opened for her into that old, cold, dreary, loveless life. It terrified her.

It is not to be said how restless she was all the next day. Many were its engagements, but none of them brought about a meeting with Colonel St. John. On Sunday morning—such was her new Anglomania—she determined to go to an English church, and to see how the English worshipped. I don't know what precise reasons she gave for the step to her father, but he was rather pleased than otherwise to be let off his service in Welbeck Street, though by reason of the heat he advised her to go to the nearest one she could find. To the nearest church she accordingly betook herself, with her maid. She found herself in a frowzy and half-empty building, where an indifferent organ led some execrable singing, and where service, indistinctly read at the best, was almost drowned by the rattle of another thunder-storm, which broke over the town a little after mid-day. Julie, the maid, was horribly frightened, and cried "*Dieu!*" very audibly at each crash. When a second ill-sung hymn had ended, then another priest from the altar began to read. He was an old man, and lion-like, and his voice, though deep and fervent, seemed to shake with earnestness, as you have seen a bridge sway over a torrent that roars and chafes just beneath it. Above the rattle of the thunder and the loud plashing of the rain it rose; and "Our Father," were the first words that he read. Véra turned pale: this was the way *he* prayed to whom her heart had begun to cleave; and, hiding her face in her hands, she knelt down and prayed an English prayer, in English speech. Often in later days she remembered it. It seemed at one time to have been but a vain, a sighing breath—but not so—He to whom it was addressed is the Father of all races, and kindreds, and tongues, and it is no small matter, even

when our personal hopes are ruined, to have caught, be it at the price of such a sorrow, a glimpse of the great paternity of God.

In the afternoon she had hoped to remain at home, feeling sure that at five o'clock Colonel St. John would appear, but Prince Michael was seized with a sudden and perverse wish to walk, and to have his daughter to walk with him; and so the hapless Véra went to the Park, saw everybody she did not care to meet, and came home late and tired, to find Colonel St. John's card.

She could not blame any one, and no one could help her. On Monday her last chance was gone, and on Tuesday, as had been settled, they went down to Folkestone, and ate their dinner to the sound of the waves.

The tidal boat was early next morning, and long before mid-day the white English cliffs had disappeared, hidden in heavy rain-clouds, while the packet pitched and leaped, and bore away to other climes one of the most reluctant beings who ever left our hospitable shores.

The lonely life had begun again. In Paris, Véra rose at seven, and walked with her maid for an hour. At 5 P. M. she drove with her father; and once, as a great favor, he had taken her to the Bois at night: but she did not ask him to repeat that experiment often—for she was trying to conquer herself, and she found that that was best done in the dull hotel looking into the Place Vendôme, or in shopping — in any thing rather than in allowing tender memories to rise when the night air was perfumed and sweet, and when stars, lamps, carriages, trees, lakes, and flowers, all were covered with that strange air of mystery and romance which is nowhere to be felt more strongly than at night in the Bois de Boulogne.

She was trying to conquer herself, to harden her heart, to wean it from all hopes, and also to forget. To forget! Trivial natures do it easily; coarse ones will even boast that they never remember. Some easily fill up their vacancies by death, and some anticipate by dropping their friends during their lifetime. But there are minds to which the hardest of all human tasks is to forget. In fact, they cannot do it, and they never do it; they can at best only set their remembrances to sleep. Rocked by such a nurse as Patience, any memory will go to sleep at length. But the task is to keep it asleep. Some touch disturbs it, and then up it starts, fresh and living as before; and on the day when it so wakens, and when the heart is made sick with the old recurring pain, there is nothing left but to pray that the way may be short, and the time at hand, of which a Father has solemnly sworn to us that He can then "make all things *new*."

CHAPTER XVI.

AN OLD AND A NEW EARL OF KENDAL.

What great pain can there be in death, which is but a continued swooning, a sweet ignorance of cares, and a never-again returning to the works and dolorous felicity of life?—DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN.

FROM such distractions as the closing weeks of that London season might offer to Colonel St. John after Princess Véra had left England, and left it blind to his suit, he was very soon called away by the sickness of Lord Kendal. The old peer had had a paralytic seizure the winter before, and Colonel St. John, feeling ever since that his life was held by a very slender tenure, hurried down at the first word of illness to Hurst Royal.

He had not been summoned, but the tone of his uncle's letter made him uneasy, and he only waited to apprise the Newbolds, then in L——shire, of his anxiety, till a personal visit to the invalid had either removed or confirmed his fears.

Evening was deepening into night as

he reached the station, and then drove on at a rapid pace toward the house. The air was heavy with dew, faint wreaths of white mist hung about the hollows, and the shadows of the woods were both gloomy and dark. All chilled his spirits, and added to his dread of some sudden termination to Lord Kendal's malady. Might he not, he asked himself, be even now too late? Reason replied that people do not die of a first paralytic stroke, and fear retorted that the *malaise* of two days ago might have portended a second one, and his heart sunk within him.

Just then a large goat-sucker swept out of the thicket, and flew away up the avenue before him, now wheeling and now alighting, as it continued its ill-omened flight just in front of his horses' heads. While he despised himself for such a piece of superstition, he had a sense of dread, or, rather, of dislike, to this bird with the noiseless bat-like wings, even when at last it settled in an ilex-tree, from which its long and plaintive note went sounding across the glades in the direction of the house.

There was nearly a mile before him still, and, once rid of the presence of the night-jar, memory began her wondrous tale, and rehearsed to Colonel St. John all the events of a lifetime, and with them the unalterable faithfulness of the man who had not only taken a father's place for him, but who had also known how to give to their tie the larger charm of friendship.

Once only had Lord Kendal crossed his nephew's will, and that had been in the matter of Miss Georgiana Lindley, when, at twenty-two years of age, Henry St. John had proposed to lay his heart, his bearskin, and his prospects, at that young lady's feet. Her relations had disapproved of a match with the son of the man whose speculations had, through Mrs. Lindley's folly, ruined the family; but Lord Kendal had done more, he had firmly refused any consent to it, and it was not till many years later that his nephew learned to know his motives. Mrs. Lindley had been the old peer's only love, and she had first jilted him for a younger and richer neighbor, and then, as a widow, laid herself open to the addresses of his brother John, an impudent profligate, who had an eye to nothing but her jointure. He had thus received a double blow from her; and it had been to avoid this lady, whether as wife or widow, that Lord Kendal had shut himself up from intercourse with his neighbors and fellows. There was little enough, it is true, in his old idol, worldly-minded and foolish as she was, to cause this sacrifice of a life, and yet the peer had virtually sacrificed his life either to her memory or to his grievance. For this is a matter in which people deceive themselves, especially if they allow themselves to be entirely ruled by their recollections, instead of looking at life through the claims and duties of to-day.

Of all artists, ancient or modern, commend me to Memory. It is there that we find the most careful eclecticism, the most genuine romance. We call Memory faithful, but that is the very thing that it is not, and perhaps we would not wish it to be. How does it not with golden pencil touch and retouch the picture of our past lives! It now draws out this detail and now suppresses that, now throws one fact into the background, and now magnifies another. Out of the harsh daguerreotype of a past reality it cannot only make a lovely and picturesque sketch, but the sketch becomes an *alto-rilievo*, and at last the figure in relief develops into a perfect statue. And for this statue, affection having prepared a golden niche, the image remains in it for evermore, the object of our perennial, and, as we fancy, faithful worship. Peculiarly true is this if the life has been, voluntarily or involuntarily, deprived of movement, novelty, and change. There is, then, no standard of reality by which to try our

impressions, and gradually those which we ascribe to Memory become in reality the new and ever new creations by which the "hollow heart" has tried to fill its vacant places.

But by such a process as this how was it possible, Colonel St. John asked himself, to account for the life which had mouldered away at Hurst Royal? The earl's had been indeed an existence sacrificed to wounded feeling, and, mistaking the caprices of a morbid imagination for the needs of the affections, he had come first to fancy himself, and then to e, unfit for the ordinary intercourse of his fellows.

There could be no doubt, on the other hand, of his wish to see his nephew's happiness secured, and Henry St. John saw in this anxiety at once another proof of Lord Kendal's love for himself, and a regretful protest against the possibility of another wifeless and childless inheritor of their name. Now that his strength was failing him, the old man had called his heir to him, less to see him die than to make arrangements for his welfare; for, all satirist as he was, Lord Kendal had fallen into the common error of supposing that, though you have made a muddle of your own life, you are not the less capable of directing, or at least suggesting, the line of conduct which your neighbor is to pursue, and which, if followed, is infallibly to bring him the happiness you have always missed.

How little either title, wealth, or the good intentions of friends could do for him at this moment, Henry St. John knew best; yet, if in his drive to Hurst Royal he forecast for himself a life as ungratified as had been his uncle's, he hugged himself at least in the thought that he had nothing to be ashamed of; that, in the pure and quiet world of Véra's heart, there was not one greedy or capricious thought, and that if, in marrying a man of her own age, instead of one so much her senior, she consulted her taste, or what was likely to be best for her own happiness, he at least had no right to complain.

His affection for the young Russian lady had never been more than tacitly expressed to Lord Kendal, but that it had been thoroughly understood was plain, for it seemed that so long as she was in England the sick man had kept his sufferings a secret from his nephew, and left him to try his fortune in London undisturbed by cares.

"We will speak of it all to-morrow," the earl said abruptly, after a half-hour's visit from his heir, and Henry St. John felt, as he left the room, that there was a something ominous in the phrase: he guessed to what subject it applied, and felt that Lord Kendal must know or think himself very near death, before he intruded on his nephew's feelings. The old peer, sitting in his wonted chair in the library, scorned any of the paraphernalia of illness, but he looked very feeble, and his voice was weak—weaker than it had been nine weeks ago, so Colonel St. John said to himself as he stood in his own room, and looked out absently into the summer night. Below the window lay the garden pleasance, a favorite view of his own, where the sward stretched smoothly toward the edge of woods, dotted here and there by evergreens, and by a few noble trees. On one extremity of the ground lay the garden, with its stiff beds, clipped yews, and stacks of hollyhocks, and on the other rose a grove of beech-trees. Through the avenues of their pale-gray stems the moonlight now straggled, playing about their tall boles, and throwing their shadows far across the bowling-green and the turf.

A loud knock at the door startled him as he stood.

"Will you come into the library, sir? I fear his lordship is gone," cried a hoarse voice, and without another question or answer he hurried along.

There, in his accustomed chair at the table, still sat the earl; his little black

skull-cap was in his hand, an open book was laid across his knee, the shaded lamp was burning, but the jaw had dropped, and he was dead!

"Had he felt ill? Had he called? Had he rung?" No, nothing had been heard; his servant going in, as he always did at eleven, had found him so, quiet, silent, and bareheaded; it seemed that when alone he had heard the sudden summons, and had reverently uncovered to the King's Herald. Thus, with no cry, with no struggle, with only this obeisance, and alone, as he had lived, died Stephen St. John, the second Earl of Kendal.

Those of my readers who have come to know them both, will guess with what heart Henry St. John then ruled at Hurst Royal in his stead.

PART IV.

IN WHICH THE WHEEL COMES FULL CIRCLE.

The wheel has come full circle.
King Lear.

CHAPTER XVII.

SISTERLY COUNSELS.

If Colonel Newbold's county neighbors in L——shire, round what is called his country-seat of Blakesmere, were like county neighbors round other people's country-seats, viz., persons suffering chronically from lack of new ideas, and new matter for general conversation, grateful ought they to have been to the Newbold family about this period of the world's history. In 1862–'63, they could discuss Lady Anne's newly-acquired precedence, and, in 1863–'64, the further fact that the family at Blakesmere were to spend their next winter in the south of France. Thirdly, and lastly, a splendid question about them was started: what chance had Lady Anne of marrying a handsome cousin of her husband's then "in residence," to the new Earl of Kendal? In pity, perhaps, for his loneliness, that gentleman was asked a great deal to Blakesmere, and when there he met Miss Harrington, to whom he was, after his manner to all women and children, exceedingly kind and courteous; so much so, that not only did the neighbors suffer extremely from curiosity, but the mistress of the house herself began to be restless, and to put out feelers in that direction. Would Henry accompany them to Nice for the winter? she wrote to ask, making a mental resolution that, if he would, Auriole Harrington should also be of the party. She got the following answer: "Nothing would tempt me to such a dust-heap, and I wonder at Newbold's rashness in going, where, in self-defence, a man must become either a botanist or a gambler. Should either of those contingencies occur I might never be able to visit at Blakesmere again, so I will join you there in the second week of September."

That prospective visit cheered Lady Anne, and when she had got her brother safe under her roof, she began to turn his thoughts in the right direction, or, as she said, "really to give Henry some good advice. Nobody needs it more."

It was curious how in her mind the facts of being a wife and a mother had obliterated the difference of age between them, and she often assumed an air of wisdom and experience that tickled Lord Kendal not a little.

"Why don't you marry?" she said to him rather abruptly one afternoon, as they sat together in her boudoir, with the children playing near them in a window.

"Because I do not wish to be bored."

"No man would be less so. I never saw any one so devoted to children as you are, and if you had a boy and girl of

your own, you would like it still better."

"Two affirmatives which do not make a negative, or prove that a wife would not bore me."

"Nonsense!" Do not pretend to be a misogynist. What is there likely to bore you in the mother of your children?"

"I might be very grateful to her for being so, but I might not, for all that, care to have a wife bleating comments and foolish exclamations at all times, or asking me questions, or playing on divers instruments!"

"But every woman does not bleat, as you call it, and there are plenty of charming girls to choose from, who do not play on instruments."

"Too many, or too few, since none of them please me."

"What are, then, really your objections to them—too much fashion, or too little?"

"Something of that. Then, too much spirits or too little, too much learning or too little, and a general vapidity. Country girls have the best of it, but they want one to play croquet, and I have only one arm."

"Well, and the London ones?"

"Are so much alike, that I might as well choose all as any one of them."

"I don't understand you."

"Consider the effect on the average male mind, after twenty years, of seeing nightly two hundred chignons and two hundred monstrous hoops, of hearing forty times a night that the room is hot; and of being asked forty times if you are going on to Mrs. Blank's?"

"Tiresome, I admit; but you can find highly-accomplished girls also."

"Yes; there are also varieties of that kind. Last week I took a girl to dinner, who talked Buckle to me; and the one on the other side talked balls. I must say I preferred the ball-going belle, as rather the least conceited of the two, though both were over average, I should say, in that respect; and yet you know that I am not myself really afraid of a woman being clever and cultivated—at least, I have not got exactly Mrs. Y.'s morbid dread of it."

"I am sure her daughters are not clever."

"There it is; but not the less has this result cost her some maternal anxiety. In fact, she once gave me to understand that she could only warrant her daughters being ignorant of history, art, or politics, because she had never so much as allowed them to associate with clever women."

"If poor Uncle Kendal had heard her, he would have cried, 'Wonderful success, madam,' to a certainty, but what did you say?"

"I could only reassure her that the complaint was nowise a catching one; and I was very near adding, more especially in cases where there was no hereditary predisposition."

"Oh, Henry! you are very satirical. I am sure that in that way you don't see the best or make the best of people. Now, there is my cousin, Auriole Harrington; she seems never to be at her ease with you, and yet she would make you a perfect wife."

"My dear Annie, what have I ever done to you that you should wish me a literal-minded wife? She would be the death of me."

"That is rather too bad of you. Auriole is a charming person. You know Alfred has the greatest regard for her; she is most useful and pleasant in the house, and I cannot conceive what anybody can object to in her. Her father gave her an excellent education. She does a great deal of good in his parish, and you cannot say that she is not pretty."

"She is really handsome, and I wish her a good husband as soon as you and she can agree upon it, for I take it she would be a loss to you. Does she not teach the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and

the Ten Commandments, in the vulgar tongue to our small friends here?"

"Oh, I should never think of any thing but her interests; and, indeed, Henry, don't be angry with me—but, as I am really very fond of Auriole, I had hoped to have her as a sister. I think she likes you, though you frighten her, and she says she never can talk if you are in the room."

"Happy provision of Nature, my dear Annie, for I feel that I never could listen to her: she is excellent, and very uninteresting."

Lady Anne colored.

"Nay, I did not mean to hurt your feelings about your cousin; you are quite right to like her, and to try to marry her; so I may as well make a clean breast of it, and tell you, once for all, that the only woman, dear Annie, whom I ever wished to marry will not accept me, and I do not care to take any other one to wife, at least not just at present."

"And she is—?"

"Another daughter of Eve, though I am not sure that you will admit that quite at first, when I tell you she is a Russian."

"Oh, Henry!" and Lady Anne, turning pale, glanced at a crayon sketch of Philip St. John which hung between the windows.

"I know. I went through the same thought about my father's son, and about many more, very dear to me, and all left on a Russian battle-field—but so it is. As long as the thing was doubtful, I never mentioned it to you, thinking it would pain you needlessly, but now there is no doubt about it."

"No doubt of what?"

"That I love her, that she will not marry me, and that I do not care to marry any other woman."

"Who is she?"

"Princess Véra Zamiàtine, an only child: she is some twenty years younger than myself, tall, fair, and beautiful; rich, I believe, and delicate, I fear. I met them on my way to Rome in the winter of 1860. I saw a great deal of her, I as good as proposed to her, and I was refused."

"So long ago as that! Then of course she has married since?"

"Not that I know of. She was in London last spring, and unmarried then."

"Oh, that girl! but people made an immense fuss about her. Was she so pretty?"

"Yes, she is not only beautiful, but —however, these are details I need not dwell on. The essential is, that she gave me to understand she meant to marry a man of her own age; very natural, and very foolish of me to think that it might ever have been otherwise, but my love for her made me feel young, and I forgot that I was really faded and maimed."

"Dear Henry, don't speak so bitterly," said Lady Anne Newbold, laying her hand on his knee; "there may be happiness in store for you yet."

"I do not feel bitterly, and my mad, intense love for her I have hitherto kept to myself."

"Did you love her so very, very much? and why?"

"Why? I despair of making another woman understand why one woman is first fascinating and then precious to a man."

"Precious, Harry?"

"Yes, exceedingly, certainly and abidingly precious, whether as a hope, or now only as a memory, and certainly not to be elbowed out or replaced by any commonplace marriage whatever. This is my reason for not going to Nice this winter. Véra is certain to be there, for the empress has taken two villas for herself, and for the ailing grand-duke, and Prince Michael Zamiàtine is one of her chamberlains."

"Then you really don't care to meet her?"

"I don't wish to run my head up

against a stone wall. I mean to turn into a British '*monotonist;*' and after Parliament meets I can go up to London, and vote for Church and State when anybody wants me to do so."

"This girl was a Papist, of course?"

"No, no, she belonged to her own, the Russo-Greek Church. Her mother was a charming companion, albeit a great invalid, the father a bluff old soldier, is well-meaning, and a bit of a bore and a military dandy. Princess Véra, like her mother, has great gifts, but, more than that, she showed me, opened for me, as it were, possibilities in herself, and still more in myself, that I never dreamt of before. I take it, it is always so, and that Love like Death is always new; they are the great teachers; the rest of things here being for the most part 'flat, stale, and unprofitable,' always excepting children, and I suppose that is the reason that I spoil yours."

"Oh, the children!" cried Lady Anne, glancing at her boy and girl. "I had quite forgotten that they were in the room.—Chicks, chicks, you ought to be at tea by this time. Pick up your toys, and be off now."

Millicent and Walter, when so advised, packed up their effects, and took leave, Millicent holding a doll with its heels higher than its head, and Walter remonstrating at the speed with which she scaled the stairs. Mrs. Ames, the nurse, met them outside the nursery-door, but there, I regret to say, the proverb was immediately verified which says that "little pitchers have long ears." Miss Harrington, who was slipping about the house in her quiet and decorous manner, also happened to meet them, and Millicent, with the horrible callousness of seven years old, and without further preamble, proceeded to tell her bluntly that "Uncle Henry did not like her."

"Hush, hush, miss; you must not talk such nonsense," cried the majestic Ames, and she bustled off the little girl without giving her time to repeat the outrage. "What *h*ever could make the child think of such a thing?" she remarked to Emma, the nursery-maid. "And Miss 'Arrington such a nice young lady, too, as *h*any gentleman might take a fancy to."

"But he does not like her," repeated Millicent, seating herself with pomp in front of her mug. "I heard him tell mamma so—didn't he, Walter?"

Walter, who was younger, and less sharp than his sister, was also at this moment busied with the intricacies of a painfully clean and bulging pinafore, so he vouchsafed no reply.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Emma; and "Well, I wonder at him!" echoed the nurse, for Miss Harrington's gentle manners had made her very popular with the servants. And then Emma, giving her head a toss, and thinking, no doubt, of a youthful admirer of her own "in the force," proceeded to take a cruel vengeance of the satirical peer. "I fancy *h*it is all along because as Miss *H*auriole won't have nothink to say to him, and looks upon him as *h*old enough to be her *h*unkle—which, indeed, to my thinking, he is."

Lord Kendal, after this conversation and his confession to his sister, went out to smoke a meditative cigar in her greenhouse, and then, need I tell my lady readers, Lady Anne took care, even before she dressed for dinner, to report to her husband every word he had said.

"It is a pity," said Colonel Newbold; "but, as there are just as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, he may take a fancy to some one else presently. I hope so; he is an excellent good fellow, and would be all the better for being married, though I am not sure that Auriole would exactly suit him."

"He frightens her with his grim jests. He is growing so like poor dear Uncle Kendal."

"Ah, I dare say."

Lady Anne could not dismiss the subject from her thoughts, and she cast and

recast it in her mind. The escape she had had from a strange sister-in-law weighed on her greatly. Accordingly, while she was having her hair done, she called to her husband, whose dressing-room door was half open, "Alfred, what is it that the Russians believe? I have forgotten, though I know I learned it at Mr. Roche's."

"Oh, I am sure I don't know; as much as is good for them, I dare say."

"Yes, yes; but I know there is something very curious about them."

Colonel Newbold, when engaged in single combat with his hair-brushes, apparently could not help her; but three minutes later he emerged, when his toilet was finished, and said: "I believe, now I think of it, they don't exactly believe in the Holy Ghost."

"Oh, dear! but that is shocking."

And then, having disposed between them, in this strange way, and yet quite to their own satisfaction, of the question of the "filioque," and of the great schism between the Eastern and Western Churches, Colonel and Lady Anne Newbold went peaceably to dinner.

CHAPTER XVIII.

COUNTESS PRASCOVIA AT HOME AND ABROAD.

Nothing can well be more distinctive of a nation or of a family than their idea and manner of travel. The German student with his knapsack, the Oriental with his praying-rug, and the Englishman with all the decencies and comforts of Western civilization, are each so many chapters on national manners; and the contrast between two families who, in October, 1864, arrived at Nice, was sufficiently marked to be amusing.

These two families, the Newbolds and the Zamiàtines, lived about a third of a mile from each other, at the west end of the town. They did not know each other, and never met, and, I need not add, were innocent of any interest in each other's presence or welfare.

The hegira of the Newbolds from L——shire had been a great affair.

Little Walter was not thriving there, and Mrs. St. John's bronchitis required both her daughter's care and the benefits of a warmer climate; and it was for these reasons that a winter in Nice had been determined on. Lady Anne Newbold left behind her her greenhouse and her school, her pretty sitting-room, her Bible-woman, her Christmas festivities, her companion Miss Harrington, her neighbor the vicar's wife, and all the belongings of a not unluxurious home.

She took with her her two children and her new baby, the majestic Ames, and a certain kitchen-maid, who was trusted to "roast and boil," and to make the custard-puddings of the nursery. Mrs. Ames carried with her a multitude of boxes, and still more of baskets, full of "Gregory's Mixture," biscuits, pieces of flannel, and other curious items, for the value of one and all of which she was ready at any moment to do battle. Colonel Newbold, who took his cigars and a selection of railway novels, both feared and hated Mrs. Ames, and avoided her, and was duly thankful when something like comfort was established in the Maison Jaume.

Then at home in L——shire all the neighbors said to each other, by way of conversation at their dinner-parties, "So the Newbolds have gone abroad for the winter, and really like Nice;" and they might have added, if they did not, that it was very good-natured of Colonel Newbold to lose his hunting, and to disturb himself so much, for the sake of Mrs. St. John—a lady who, if she was now less lively, was not much more considerate for others than she had been wont to be.

In their hegira the Zamiàtines had not been so much left to themselves as regarded the choice of time and place; for, in his capacity of chamberlain to the

empress, Michael Zamiàtine had simply to follow his august mistress when she came with her son to spend a winter at Nice.

A winter in a warm climate was always a boon to Princess Véra, and the only forethought that this plan demanded, so far as she was concerned, was that her father had to look about for a duenna, and Prince Michael believed that he had done the best thing for all concerned, when he offered a place in his family for that winter to Countess Prascovia Zotoff.

She had lived with them, as we know, once before—during the first winter of the war in the Crimea. She was his cousin: nay, she was an old flame of his own, and she had always professed the most unbounded affection for Véra, both for her own sake and for that of her poor dear Alexis.

Véra heard of the arrangement, then, without a misgiving, and she was glad when Aunt Pascha,* as she called the lady, joined them at Berlin, on their way to the south of Europe.

Countess Zotoff's journey was made in truly national style.

She could not travel with less than two maids, nor without silver basins and ewers. She had many bottles of medicines, and many essences, for Aunt Pascha loved perfumes, and she set her face against the modern fashion of cigarettes. "In my time," she would say, raising a thin hand in the air as she spoke, "in my time, such a thing never was heard of." There were three holy pictures in massive frames, and a copy of the "Lives of the Saints" in Russian, among her belongings, but she had no Bible, "for in *my* time," she said again, "*that* was not read." Last and least, she had a dog, which—though its name, Marphise, was French—was neither more nor less than a King Charles spaniel. Its ears were long, and its temper was short, and it was asthmatic, either from repletion or from taking no exercise.

* Diminutive of Prascovia.

Countess Prascovia did not herself take exercise, and she dreaded open windows; perhaps for those reasons she was very sallow; but she was a tall, graceful woman, always well dressed in some shade of brown silk. She wore beautiful pearls and fine old laces: and, in spite of being much nearer fifty than she cared to own, was still, with her narrow, sloping shoulders, and with her glorious brown eyes, a very handsome woman.

She had once been a beauty, but somehow her life had been a failure, or, at least, less brilliant than she felt it ought to have been. As a girl, she had not married Michael Zamiàtine as she hoped to have done; only, in his stead, a kind, indulgent, learned man, the late Dimitri Grigorovitch, who, just when he might have looked for distinction, had died, and left her with an only son.

On this Alexei Dimitrivitch the widow's hopes had then been built. When he left the Corps des Pages at nineteen, she thought Alexis would rise; her Alexis, too, would be sure to marry well. Alas! before two years were out, Alexis was "wedded to his grave"—his grave under the Crimean snows.

The war crippled her finances, as it did those of almost all the nobles in Russia, and she had had to contend for some time with both sorrow and poverty, while her surroundings were made sadder by a universal mourning, by a scarcity through the length and breadth of the land, by the death of the great Czar, and by the many subsequent changes among the members of official life in Russia. She had lived on in Moscow, or near one of the great convents, and now, just as she was recovering from all these adverse things, she was called on to face, and with reluctance, the loss of her personal charms.

Then began a struggle in Countess Prascovia's mind, as she debated with herself whether ever again to go into society, and so, perhaps, by a second marriage, secure a better position in it for

herself, or whether to renounce a world that for years had taken but little notice of her, and to abide by a life of religious practices and of small feminine pursuits.

Between these two courses she wavered, till habit, stronger than principle, cast its weight into the scale of devotion. In her rooms, which were never aired, there lingered a constant smell of incense, probably from the evening service of the night before, for Countess Pascha liked to have prayers said in her house, and she liked, after prayers, to have the priest, and any nuns who might be her visitors, to tea.

On such occasions she believed that she had ceased to regret the world of courts and camps to which she had once belonged. Yet, when Prince Michael's invitation reached her, it did not cost her any very great effort to tear herself away from the routine inside of which she had for some time cultivated so assiduously the welfare of her body and of her soul.

Nice, she had heard, was good for old sprains, and she told her confidential friends that she hoped to find it so, as her ankle was still weak. She told her conscience that where the court was, there spiritual privileges would not be lacking; and she told her heart that it was very gratifying to be trusted by her cousin, Michael Wassilievitch, with the charge of his house and of his only daughter.

With these dispositions, then, to please and be pleased, Aunt Pascha settled herself at Nice, in a beautiful villa on the Promenade des Anglais.

The rooms were *au premier*, and undeniably luxurious; a garden-wall and eight superb cypress-trees separated the house from the roadway, so that by day there was less glare, dust, and noise, than might have been expected; only at night you heard the loud boom of the waves, and their recession, as they "drew the tinkling pebbles down the beach," and far away to the westward you saw the lights of Antibes. Véra asked herself, as she looked, how she should like a winter's residence in Nice-sur-Mer.

CHAPTER XIX.

TASTES DIFFER.

How she might like a winter of Countess Zotoff's society was a question she had not yet put to herself, for Princess Véra was naturally amiable, and not apt to be critical; but ere long that question forced itself on her, and, finally, she had to confess that half a year of Aunt Pascha's *régime* was likely to be a severe trial to her taste and temper.

She took herself severely to task for this. "How I must have altered!" she said to herself. "How touchy and selfish I must have grown, to be so often out of patience with poor Aunt Pascha! She not only means well, but I used to be fond of her. Of course it was a little for Alexis's sake then; but she was very kind to me. Now I don't know how it is, but she fidgets me sadly, and she cares for none of the things that mamma did."

Countess Zotoff certainly did not, and no wonder that Anna Feodorovna's child was bored by her, since, between the courageous, clever, cosmopolitan woman, whose heart and house were open to all that was best and most cultivated in Europe, and the dull narrowness of Aunt Pascha's prejudices, there was all the difference that there is between a beautiful room, lighted, warmed, and perfumed, and an ill-aired stone cell.

The countess was a very obstinate woman, and her vanity required constant feeding to prevent its becoming vicious. About her charge she was very little inclined, after the first, to trouble herself; soon considering it more Michael Wassilievitch's place to devote himself to her, than hers to go to charges for his daughter. She was physically indolent, and averse to exertions of either mind or body,

though her indolence did not always prevent her being fidgety and exacting. Curious to say, but, without ever having committed a grave fault, without that either cruelty, gallantry, or any other conspicuous vice could be laid at her door, there was in this woman an absence of positive virtue that not only contrasted forcibly with Véra's mother, but gave to her character a tinge of all the vices in turns. To listen to her at one time you would have said her morality was weak; at another, that her love of money was inordinate, and her truthfulness but equivocal at the best; thus badly weak, she was sometimes weakly bad; but what made her most trying as a companion was an aridity of soul, an energy of self-will, and a power of small rancorous anger about small wrongs, that made her a less good woman than is many an outcast of society. She was religious from egotism, and nursed her soul, as she did her body, lest any thing should happen to it, rather than from any devotion to that Supreme Object for whose knowledge and fruition the soul itself was formed.

She averred that she did not care for society, but not the less did she, at the end of her first month in Nice, resent her own insignificant place in it. Véra was much admired, but that only made matters worse, and, as she said, "made the girl conceited," so she determined to retreat, and after the first month went no more into the world. The world, you may be sure, did not follow her; thus her spiritual exercises were undisturbed, and her only distractions were her dog, the visits of a certain Dr. Prosch, who manipulated her ankle, and endless games of cards with Prince Michael, who never opened a book, and whose evenings, now that he was growing elderly, often hung heavy on his hands.

Véra, debarred by Countess Zotoff's tastes from many of the home amusements and from the society to which, in her mother's lifetime, she had been accustomed, went out every night; satisfied that her father was happy at the card-table, and too young and too little worldly-wise to forecast the consequences of the perpetual *tête-à-tête* which she left behind her at the Villa Belloni. She found a chaperon every evening in an old friend of her mother's, a Princess Kourbsky, who, as having been a member of their society during that winter in Rome, was always dear to Véra.

Katiche Kourbsky, as her friends called her, was a clever, strong-minded woman, repulsively plain, but pleasing withal, very animated, and gifted with that intelligence, at once keen and supple, which distinguishes so many of her compatriots. She was a thorough woman of the world, always practical, good-tempered, and shrewd; holding Countess Zotoff's pietism and her pretensions both in the greatest contempt, and having a proportionate pity for Véra, which was increased when she discovered the skeleton in the girl's cupboard. She had an uncongenial home; she was not unlikely, so Princess Kourbsky thought, soon to have Countess Pascha for a step-mother, and now it would appear that she had also a hopeless attachment for an Englishman whom she was not very likely to see again.

Véra made one day what is called a clean breast of this matter, as a decisive reason for declining Serge Donskoï's suit, which was now being urged for the third time, and that with very pressing assiduity.

"What!" cried her friend; "the Colonel St. John with the one arm? I remember him in Rome perfectly. But this is a detestable game of cross-purposes that you are playing at, for in Rome he seemed to be perfectly devoted to you."

"He liked us all very much; I am sure he does so still; but do you really think he cared for me then?"

"Why, you little owl! why else should he have asked you if you could live always among strangers, or go to

England, or something to that effect, which you once told me he did?"

"Did I tell you that then? I remember his saying it very well; but I did not understand any thing more by it; it never entered into my dreams in those days to marry, or to suppose anybody wanted to marry me. I knew Serge was silly; but—I suppose I was too."

"So it seems. Has he never proposed to you since?"

"Never; he has never come within a mile of such a subject. I do not know his home, or his people. He has got a sister, I believe—that is to say, a half-sister—about my own age, and he lost a brother at Inkermann, and that is all I really know about him; except—except that, of course, I knew him very well—better than anybody else; and—and do not laugh at me—he used to treat me so oddly, tell me what to do, and look after me, and say, 'I think you should do that,' or 'Put on your cloak immediately;' so that if—if we had been married people—I mean if he had been my husband for five years—I do not think he could have treated me very differently. He was always there, and yet never in the way; and, though he laughed at most people, he never frightened me, or teased me. Ah! he was at any rate the best friend I ever had; but I ought not to speak so, for he never paid court to me, and I only tell you about him because I have no one else to speak to. Serge is a positive plague to me. I cannot, and I will not, marry a man I do not respect; I promised my mother on her death-bed that I would not. I had rather be single all my life; and why Aunt Pascha should wish me to marry him I cannot imagine."

"I can guess, though," retorted Princess Kourbsky, with a dry laugh. Véra pleaded for an explanation.

"No, no; find it out for yourself. But do not marry him, for, if you do, I will drop you—and I give you fair warning of that beforehand."

Véra was correct in saying that Aunt Pascha wished her to give her hand to our old acquaintance, the spendthrift violinist, who, except in musical execution, had certainly not improved in any way since we saw him first in Rome. But the absence of domestic virtues in this young Muscovite mattered not to Countess Zotoff. She would always say that Prince Serge was handsome and noble, his family was as old as any in the province, and his mother, of devout memory, a friend of her own. Then, if he was penniless, Véra was rich; and, at all hazards, she would be so glad to be rid of her, that no pretender to the princess's hand could come amiss. And this one was an orthodox Russian, she further begged you to observe, and was not his name in the first copy of the *Rodoslovnīa Kniga* of Ivan III., and what more would Véra have?

The reader no doubt has been much more clear-sighted than was Prince Michael's daughter, and has already guessed, along with Princess Kourbsky, that, as backgammon had succeeded to chess, chess to écarté, and écarté to piquet, on the tables of the Villa Belloni, so had a courtship, in all the forms, succeeded to the sort of elderly philandering with which Aunt Pascha and Michael Wassilievitch had begun their winter together. It was now finally agreed between them that Véra's marriage should be the signal for a match which had very nearly taken place twenty-nine years before, and which was to insure the happiness of their declining years. Véra, the person most interested in this arrangement, was the last to suspect it, and also the last to hear of it. No one ventured to tell her, till Countess Zotoff, in order to make assurance doubly sure, hinted at it so plainly one day in her father's presence, that his daughter, after receiving a very hypocritical kiss from her step-mother-to-be, and, after kissing her hand in return, gazed blankly in his face. The old gentleman hemmed, coughed, cleared his throat, stroked his mustache, and then,

attempting a joke, mumbled out something about its being Véra's duty to set them all a good example.

"Yes, yes; we hope soon to wish you joy, my dear," echoed Countess Zotoff, and Véra left the room, to digest, as best she might, her first genuine anger, and her first disenchantment with the world, and all that it contained.

Odious enough was the prospect, as far as she herself was concerned, to have the alternative of marrying Serge Donskoï, or of having Aunt Pascha fastened to her, not as a visitor, or as a temporary infliction, but as a step-mother, and as her mother's successor. But what could her father be made of, to forget that mother so soon? — the woman whose tender, heroic spirit had made every hour noble, and her home beautiful, while she lived, and whose unseen presence still seemed to hover about her only child.

"Queen! mother! best blessing and darling!" Véra sobbed, as she fell on her knees beside the bed, "is it not enough that you are dead, and gone, and that I am alone, and hungry, and cold?—why do they insult you?—does no one love you now but me? Mammy! mammy!" she cried, and wept out her angry pain in hot and streaming tears.

When she rose from her knees she was quieter; but she avoided her father all day, and not one syllable on the subject could she bring herself to utter at any time. People respected her silence, seeing that she went about as before, to balls and walking parties, albeit quite preoccupied and depressed by this great and unexpected grievance. Princess Kourbsky, of course, saw by her face that Anna Feodorovna's child was now in possession of the most bitter piece of knowledge she could ever acquire, and guessed the form which her meditations on it were not unlikely to take.

But there were days on which Véra could hardly persuade herself that it was true, and that her mother was already forgotten. She recalled her daily and hourly charms, her wit, and refinement of mind and body, and asked herself how it was that a man who had had such a companion for more than twenty years should seek out and appropriate the most vapid and bigoted woman of his acquaintance? It was most bitter to have to blame her father, and, from induction, to begin to suspect what her mother's life with him had been: not only a struggle, as Véra well knew, with bodily pain, but a ceaseless crucifixion of self, adapting herself to the lower level of her husband, serving a man whose nature was inferior to her own, and hiding all his faults, for so loyal and docile had she been, that no hint had ever escaped her, from which Véra could now infer that Princess Anna had felt any irk, privation, or strain.

Living humbly with men, and superbly alone in the communion of God, adoring her child, yet never overexciting that child's exquisite sensibility—such had beeen Prince Michael's wife; and now Countess Pascha, with her dog, and her quack doctor, and her pettish, prejudiced mind, seemed likely to suit him as well, or better!

Any worldly-wise woman could have explained it all to Véra in one sentence, by telling her that, whereas Anna Feodorovna never flattered her husband, Prascovia Borisovna would be sure to do so. But Véra, poor child, was still an idealist, and was only gaining her experience that the people who came up to the ideal standard are few and far between, exiles from another region, "strangers yet," and as such easily dispensed with by those who cannot understand their aims, their language, or their hopes. They may do a great deal of good in the world, but they do not fit into it. "Holy things for holy persons," says St. John Chrysostom, in his Office of the Mass, and Princess Anna had been but indifferently suited by nature for the place she filled; nor, supposing her to have forecast this second marriage, would she have been, in her wise humility, much sur-

prised to see an inferior preferred before her.

It was weeks before Véra could recover her calmness. She dreaded and hated the change in herself which had too surely followed upon the change she saw in others; she was restless and forlorn, only too dignified for complaint, though the beautiful sunshine on sea and shore seemed to mock her angry and solitary spirit.

From this wretchedness of hers grew Serge Donskoï's best hope, his chance of fairly starving the place into submission. He had the wit to appreciate the situation, and pressed the siege so unremittingly that Véra at last was seen to parley. She despised herself for her weakness, but she had no hopes of succor. Serge was affectionate and kind, he might be worthless, but he was winning; and, as he talked to her of old days in Moscow and in Rome, she relented so far as not only to dance a good deal with him, but to ask him often to the house to play duets with her. Dussek and Mozart not only soothed her nerves, but often served to drown the *obligato* accompaniment of Aunt Pascha's chattered encouragement and congratulations.

In three days more, I believe the city must have surrendered, and then Sergei Martinovitch might have entered it as a conqueror.

CHAPTER XX.

A MARCH THAT COMES IN LIKE A LION, AND GOES OUT LIKE A LAMB.

Joy, that forever coming comes not quite.
Rhoades.

It is said that one should not holloa till one is out of the wood, and invalids in the south of France would do well to remember the proverb, for, though Christmas-Day may be all sunshine, with roses blossoming in every hedgerow, it does not for all that follow that, on the 1st of March, the hills will not be white with snow, and that the *bise* will not then find out all the weak points in your frame. It happened that the spring of 1865 was one of unusual severity, and by March not only were the crests of the mountain-chains beyond the Var, and the Paillon, covered, but Mont Chauve himself, the hill that forms the background to Nice, and generally shelters it from the north, had a white mantle over his head, and on his bare flanks.

It happened also that Mrs. St. John selected the period of this inclement weather for a course of social pleasures, and of consequent imprudences, and that the result of the last of her carnival amusements was a very bad attack of bronchitis. By the end of the tenth day she was in such absolute danger that Lord Kendal was telegraphed for from England, summoned, as the Newbolds thought, really only to see her die.

His lordship had, in the previous summer, formed, and even expressed, as we heard, a serious intention of avoiding Nice, as a place where he was likely again to encounter his "pebble-hearted" princess, and he would have had every one (himself included) know that he was not a man to flutter like a moth round a candle. Yet, such is human nature, so fallible, and so fond of being tempted, that it might be unkind here to pursue the inquiry of how far Lord Kendal was not well pleased to be called thither, especially to go furnished with so excellent an excuse or motive. Suffice it to say that he felt no ill-will to his step-mother's bronchitis, and that, when, on his arrival, Mrs. St. John was found, like that classic dog of Mother Hubbard's, "laughing," viz., recovering admirably, his satisfaction with her was complete.

It was with a curiosity of the most lively kind that he sallied forth early next day for a walk into the town. A copy of the *Liste des Étrangers* could do him no harm. After he had found out where the Zamiatines lived, it would be time enough to settle about calling on

them: perhaps it would be bearish not to do so, that is to say, of course if he remained in the place, which he had not determined on as yet. Still it would surely be a pity to have come so many hundred miles for nothing, and to go back to the London fogs when one was in the enjoyment of such a sea and sky.

The morning was perfect. Beds of scarlet salvias and purple veronicas were in flower under his sister's windows as he sallied forth, jasmine and heliotrope perfumed her garden, and orange and Japanese medlar trees bordered the road. When he reached the shore the big white waves were rolling in, the sun glittering on their spray; a boat with red-capped fishermen went past, and children offered for sale bunches of scarlet tulips. With nerves new braced, and head erect, he walked on. There were a good many people already on the promenade, early worshippers, like himself, of this life-giving sun, but he had walked for nearly half a mile before, in that medley of nationalities, he lit on a face that he knew.

He was stopped by a Russian lady whom he had not met for five years, and who, rising from one of the benches, held out her hand to him with a smile.

"Where have you dropped from, Colonel St. John?" she said; "how glad I am to see you again!"

"I arrived here yesterday, and this is my first walk in Nice, princess."

"And how and where are you?"

"Very thankful to see the sun, and to be at my brother-in-law's; Maison Jaume, I think, Colonel Newbold calls his villa."

"You are to make some stay, I dare say; you must have plenty of friends here. This place is crammed."

"I hope that if the friends exist they will all do me the honor you have just done in remembering me, Princess Kourbsky."

"Well, give them a chance. I have some *tableaux* at my house to-morrow night; shall I send you a card? You will at least find a selection of the inhabitants there."

"I shall be very grateful to you," and then they walked on together to the corner of the Jardin Publique, where they parted, Princess Kourbsky going home to her breakfast in very good spirits. "What a piece of good luck!" she said to herself; "now I shall get to the bottom of this business, and of my poor Véra's delicate distresses; but how fortunate, and how wonderful are the ways of Providence! three days hence it might have been too late."

"What can be the matter with you to-day?" said Véra afterward to her friend, as she noticed the elation of Princess Kourbsky's spirits.

"I have my *tableaux* on my mind, my dear child, and I can't let you away; you must promise to spend all to-morrow with me too, for you are the only person who can keep M. Gouache in good-humor, and if he is out of temper he is capable of blowing out the candles at the last moment, and of spoiling all."

In this way the wily hostess contrived to keep Véra, as it were, under lock and key, until the evening when the *tableaux* came off. In the last of these Véra was to appear as Ruth. It was a composition of M. Gouache, the artist who superintended the whole affair, and who promised himself great praise and many orders in consequence of this picture. The princess was to wear a coarse, dark-blue and red stuff, such as the Roman and Umbrian peasants use for their costumes, where the contrast of the mass of crimson drapery with her long fair hair, bare arms, and wide, white sleeves was really very telling.

Out of regard to her *tableaux*, Princess Kourbsky decided not to say any thing to her heroine of Lord Kendal's arrival in Nice; it would only distract her attention; let them meet afterward at supper, she said to herself; besides, she must really not meddle or make in it, but leave things to speak for them-

selves, by which means she could arrive at a better judgment of the real state of affairs between them. Lord Kendal in that morning walk had certainly not named Véra, and that was a fact which she was glad not to have to communicate to the young lady, and thus she determined, for the sake of all concerned, to say no more about the invitation sent to the one-armed Englishman, than about any other name on her visiting-list.

The only drawback to her plans was that, in his capacity of a musician and artist, Prince Serge had contrived to beg or steal an *entrée* to the green-room, and she feared that she might not be always able there to keep him and Véra separate. She put great trust, however, in M. Gouache's power of boring the girl about her part, and could only hope for the best.

When Lord Kendal joined her party on Thursday night, he found, as his hostess had said, various acquaintances among the hundred or so of persons collected in her rooms, and all now seated in rows of chairs, waiting for the curtain to draw up.

But in these rows of people no Princess Véra was to be descried.

He glanced at the programme which he had in his hand, and there read her name as appearing, but in the very last *tableau*, so it was with some impatience that he witnessed the reproduction of various well-known pictures, all marvellously pretty effects of M. Gouache's skill in drapery, lighting, and arranging the figures.

At length the curtain rose for the last time, and then the fiery little Frenchman, who had planned it, might well have been pleased with the success of his *tableau*. It elicited an instant murmur of applause.

The light in it was strong, but it was level, as if of a sunset, and the gleaner held one hand above her eyes so as to shade them. On her head, separated from her long fair hair by a crimson kerchief, was a sheaf of wheat-ears, and another bunch of these lay on the arm which rested on her girdle. Both arms were bare, firm, and pure as marble, only the fingers had faint rosy tinges about their tips; she wore curious flat metal bands above the elbow, and from the uplifted arm a large, wide, white linen sleeve had fallen back. M. Gouache's *tableau* was pronounced to be a perfect study of color. Princess Kourbsky looked at the face: when the curtain drew up, the level-looking, serious eyes had seemed to gaze wearily before them into the distance, as if indeed longing for that succor and protection which the Moabitish woman sought and found in the fields of Boaz. There was something devoted and yet plaintive in the expression which touched all her hearts. Suddenly it was as if that expression had changed, and when the curtain fell, the artist rushed forward to Véra. "Ah, *princesse*, you are an actress as well as an artist: you have made my fortune. Ah! how you have known to embody the worthy sentiments of that heroine who would follow another into a strange land, and even die there! What grace! what a charm!"

Serge, too, was instantly at her side. "How charming you have been! but are you not too tired? What can I do for you? You are pale."

"Relieve me only, I pray you, of this," replied Véra, as she lifted the sheaf from her head, and absently threw it down on the floor. It fell at Serge's feet. The girl was too absent, too carried away with the amazed, delighted surprise which the sight of Lord Kendal had caused her, to notice it. She trod upon air, and yet she trembled when she felt how nearly she had forfeited her own self-respect, and, by encouraging Prince Serge, nearly ruined all her chances of happiness. The sight of him was now a reproach to her; she had been basely weak to draw on a man who had no real hold upon her, except through her im-

patience of Countess Pascha's presence and plans. Feeling ashamed and yet glad, tired and yet relieved, she walked quickly away to change her dress, and to escape from other congratulations or comments. As she did so, she missed the aside which her last gesture had called forth from a witty compatriot who had witnessed it: "Voilà, la belle glaneuse, qui donne à manger à son âne."* Serge, if he did not overhear it, either had felt all the indifference which her air betrayed, or felt that, for some reason or other, the lady of his affections was out of tune, and that he was out of favor. He might possibly have recovered from the rebuff had it not, at supper, been all explained to him. The one-armed Englishman, his old rival, was at Véra's side. Her eyelids were dropped, but by a jealous rival their meaning was easily read; and from that evening the young Russian nobleman went no more to the Villa Belloni. After that day the morals and manners of poor Prince Serge had a decidedly down-hill tendency; and sometimes, when he had imbibed a good deal of champagne, his strictures on female fickleness were very severe.

For Véra and for Lord Kendal there succeeded three weeks of great, and yet not quite unalloyed felicity: they hardly understood or trusted each other yet. Both, fearing to betray the depth and strength of their feeling for each other, now let it show itself, and now repressed it, till an anxious chaperon, like Princess Kourbsky, might sometimes have thought that they had quarrelled. Véra was, she said, far the most perverse of the two: and this was true, for the stronger grew her tenderness, the more she feared its power, and strove to hide it from every eye—from that of the man she loved, and from the vigilance of her friend, who gave parties, planned expeditions, and, by giving them every opportunity of meeting, hoped soon to bring matters to a crisis. While she was plotting, while Lord Kendal was trying to penetrate the veil of reserve which Véra wore, and, while Aunt Pascha was bewailing the sudden cessation of Prince Serge's visits, the crisis was hastened, but by a public event over which these foolish lovers had no possible control.

* "See, the fair gleaner is giving her donkey something to eat!"

CHAPTER XXI.

APRIL DAYS.

> Death knows no sympathy;
> He tramples on all tenderness:
> He whets his scythe with trophies such as these.
>
> SIR J. BOWRING'S *Russian Poets.*

WHEN the morning of what in pious Provençal phrase would have been called "the fair day of God" (lou bel jour de Diéu), of Monday, the 18th of April, broke over Nice-sur-Mer, it was as pearly, and as auspicious, as any day in that land of sea and sun could well be. It was one of those that justify the rhyme which bids its inhabitants forsake the north for the south, the waters for the land, the mountains for the plain, and, leaving all countries, "hold them to Provence."* The wind this morning was still from the east of south—"wind of the sun," as the boatmen declared, sirocco as the invalids called it—but up in the gardens of the Villa Bermont the air was more balmy and light, and, if the great Judas-tree there shook down showers of its blossoms about the bank, the solitary date-palm that grew above it barely felt its crown of leaves stirred by the breeze; and thus, when the heir of all the Russias stepped out into the garden before 7 A. M., the sunshine, and the vernal gladness around him, might not only be held to have been a prophecy of life and recovery, but have chased "all sadness but despair."

* Lauso l'Uba, tènte à l'Adré:
Lauso leu Mount, tèn-te à la plano:
Lauso la Mar, tènte à la Terro:
Lauso la Françò, e tènte à Prouvençò.
Proverbial Saying.

Yet an hour later despair filled the Villa Bermont. The Czarewitch had had a strange seizure in the garden: he was ill; he was dying; the empress was in tears, the household was in confusion; some even added that he was already dead. Then messages began to go to and fro; first, to the prefecture to summon up to the imperial antechamber the governor of the province; then, to the church in the dusty fields between Longchamps and Carabaçel, to command prayers to be made there for Nicholai Alexandrovitch; then, to the roadstead, where the big frigates lay with their topgallants high above the olive-trees, and the miniature fort of Villefranche, and their white rows of hammocks all showing in the morning sun: the message was to the *Vitias*, bidding her get up her steam, and be ready at a moment's notice to go round to Leghorn, to fetch the Grand-duchess Marie. From the railway-station telegrams went out ever and anon, speeding across Europe, to St. Petersburg to summon a father, and to Copenhagen to summon a bride.

In the anteroom the scene was one of hurry, confusion, and dismay; the physicians could not hold out much hopes, and the sacraments were to be given at 2 P. M., while the sufferer was still conscious, and in the mean time his mother hardly ever for a moment left his side. Every one feared the worst.

Down in the town the bad news spread rapidly. The officers of the Chasseurs à pied de la Garde Impériale spread the report when they came off duty. The prefect, when he returned to breakfast from his melancholy visit at the Villa, confirmed it; some said that it was unexpected, some that it was only what might have been looked for; some declared that he had caught cold at a review given in his honor on a bitterly cold day in March, when it certainly had rained torrents as he returned from the Var: in short, there was much discussion, which could not, of course, in any way alter the facts, and an atmosphere of gloom and suspense replaced the brightness and the sunny promise of the morning.

A reception which had been arranged for that evening at the prefecture was put off, but a few private engagements held good, even among the Russians, and thus it happened that afternoon, at the end of a long, rambling walk which had begun in the valley of the Sainte Madelaine, and ended in the gardens of the Villa Gastaud, that Princess Véra Zamiàtine and Lord Kendal found themselves in each other's company, and in that of about eight other people, English and Russian. Her father was not of the party; propriety kept him waiting for any possible summons to the Villa Bermont, but Princess Kourbsky was there, and another young Russian girl, an acquaintance of the Zamiàtines. Véra was tired, and when the party dispersed themselves about the gardens, she sat down more than once to rest. The evening sunshine was now as beautiful as had been that of the morning. In the high trellises over her head, covered with Wisterias in luxuriant flower, the turtle-doves fluttered and cooed, and down the other side of the garden there ran an avenue of Judas-trees, of which the flowering vista was only closed by the view of a sea, barred now with green and now with purple, as it was ruffled here and there by the southerly breeze. The terrace at the end of this avenue is built out into a kind of bastion, and, from the benches arranged there, Véra and her companion overlooked the dusty fringe of olives that hide the line of the railway, the church, and the red roofs of Saint-Hélène, the hundred flowering aloes on the beach, the line of surf, and all the expanse (from the Pharos of Villefranche to the mouth of the Var) of that bay of Nice to which a fond local love has given the local name of *Baio dis Anges*.

The conversation turned on the party at the prefecture, of which some of the

younger members complained heavily of being disappointed.

"I am very sorry for the disappointment, and still more sorry for the cause," said Lord Kendal to Véra, who seemed vexed by the babble and the grumbles of a girl beside her.

"It is terribly sad. My father says the distress at the Villa Bermont is indescribable."

"And it seems so very uncertain whether this poor young man will live to see his father and the Princess Dagmar."

"Ah, poor girl! How right she is to come. Do you not think so? I do feel for her, this poor Dagmara! Do you know what her name means?"

"No."

"*Day's-dawn*, the making of the day. It seems such a mockery of all her hopes, when they are blighted so early, and her *day* is clouded before it was really *made*." And, as Véra said this, her eyes filled with the tears of her ready pity.

Lord Kendal, who looked at her, felt at once that he had never seen her so lovable, and also that, by this very display of tenderness for others, she seemed to be more than ever removed from him; it was as if she were a something more than ever beyond his reach. Something like anger actually rose in his heart against this impregnably gentle lady. "It is indeed a sad business," he said, "though I wonder that even this should have power to move you so much, a woman who seems to me to live always so much more by the head than by the heart."

This unlooked-for attack amazed Véra. She hardly seemed to understand it at first, but Lord Kendal's eyes showed some reproach was implied: and then, seeing that no excuse followed, she deigned not a syllable in reply, but, gathering her dress about her, she rose up, and walked away. For once in the course of her gentle life she was fairly angered, and for once in the course of it her guelder-rose-colored beauty was flushed, and with that flush there had risen up a lambent, regal anger into her eyes, which had astonished the aggressor. It seemed that the blood of five centuries of boyars, if it did not often stir in any one so gentle, and so polished, evidently could stir; and it prevented her from exchanging another word with Lord Kendal, while it sent her home hurt, silent, and offended.

She was left to her own reflections for the greater part of that evening, when Countess Zotoff and the servants went to vespers, and it was not till the next morning that a different turn was given to her thoughts, when, along with her father, she had to attend the funeral of Count Orloff. To her, and to him, these obsequies, conducted under the cloud of sickness and sorrow at their court, and with such materials only as a French watering-place could supply, seemed at best but a maimed affair, and hardly worthy of the statesman they were meant to honor. But to Western eyes, unaccustomed to Russian manners, this spectacle *à la Russe* was sufficiently interesting and curious.

A permission for foreign troops to carry arms through the town having been asked for, and at once granted by the courteous authorities, a great body of marines from the Russian frigates accompanied the remains, trailing their muskets as they marched to the saddest and sweetest of strains—a tune which resembles a love-song far more than a death-march.* His son followed the coffin on foot, and then came a deputation of local dignities, and so many carriages filled with ladies in white, that the procession attracted a great deal of attention as it wound across the bridge, and all the streets and windows were lined with spectators. On a high, open, and painted car lay the coffin, and on it were laid the hat, the sword, and the many orders of the deceased; and in this state Nicholas

* The march from the '*Gaesa Ladra*,' which the Russians have appropriated to the same use as we have done the march in '*Saul*.'

Orloff carried away with him, into the greater and more august secrecy of death, the many strange secrets with which he had been intrusted in life.

Grandson of that councillor and favorite of Catharine II., who murdered the Czar Peter III., himself the confidential friend of the Emperor Nicholas, and tutor at one time to the royal boy now on his death-bed, Count Orloff was also head of the police in Russia, master of great estates, and lord but very recently of many thousands of souls; and it had been very common to credit him with sharing, if not with absolutely originating, more than one political crime. To-day, accordingly, as the funeral-car rolled out of sight among the streets in the trans-Paillon side of the town, gossip made very free with his name, and the by-standers, even while feeling something of the pathos of seeing this old governor show the way on which his young prince was so soon to follow, discussed the sayings and doings of the silent statesman, of the courtier, who even now played the part of a master of the ceremonies as he opened the door into the presence of the king of terrors. "How," some people asked, "how did Empress Elizabeth, wife of the Czar Alexander I., come by her death?" "And how, when, and where, did the Grand-duke Constantine expiate the crime of being the rightful, albeit the abdicated, heir to a throne? Did he not die a prisoner? or was he not blind? Blindness is a curious complaint, and one which none of his family had ever suffered from." "But the royal family of Russia has droll complaints: a scarf has been known to be fatal to some of them." "Yes, in good hands." "And what about Diebitsch?" began another *frondeur* in the crowd; and then the listeners agreed that that great general's complaint had been so far like that of Constantine, that it had had no name. "He had the real complaint, however, of being too successful," put in a third speaker. "And so success went out of fashion, as we all saw in the Crimea," said a fourth; and this jest was so pleasing to French vanity that it took immensely, and passed from mouth to mouth; but just then the rain began to fall, and some thunder to growl about the Esterelles, and so the crowd dispersed; and, if the reputation of the late Count Nicholas Orloff underwent any further discussion that day, his rhadamanthine judges must have done it at home.

Such are the penalties of fame, and of high station.

Lesser people have lesser pains; and so it was that a lover's quarrel had sufficed all that morning to make Lord Kendal very unhappy

CHAPTER XXII.

ZENITH.

> I spent an afternoon within
> The city of the clouds.
>
> G. W. Thornbury.

The silent, reproachful air which Véra had worn as he saw her last, as well as the outline of her beautiful figure, when, with the doves flying about her head, and filling up the end of that vista of purple flowering trees, it had stood out sharply defined against the lines of sea and sky, haunted Lord Kendal. Thus he was tempted to do what he very seldom did, viz., pay a morning visit, and, seeking out the princess at her house, make, if possible, his peace with her.

He had never, as it happened, found her at home, or seen her with Countess Zotoff before, but he chose an hour today late enough to be seemly, and yet so early as that the heat would be sure to confine the inhabitants of the villa behind its closed *persiennes*. The ladies were at home, and he was accordingly shown into a room where Countess Zotoff was lying fanning herself on a sofa, with Marphise in a basket beside her, and where Véra, seated at the piano-forte, was singing, *à mezza voce*, surely, for the door of

the *salon* had been gained before her voice reached her visitor's ear. She rose, colored a little, and then smiled as she held out her hand, but their meeting was slightly awkward, partly from the fact that Lord Kendal brought a sort of curiosity or consciousness with him, and that Véra's timid quietness was increased by the very frigid way in which Countess Zotoff thought proper to return his bow and his presentation to herself. As that valetudinarian lady did not go out at night, they had never met before, and, if with Véra Lord Kendal was often able to forget that he was in the society of a foreigner, he saw in a glance that with Countess Zotoff it was certainly impossible to do this, for Countess Prascovia was very peculiar-looking. Like Véra, she was tall, but her sallow face, large brown eyes, narrow hands, and very pliant figure, all struck him as belonging to an unfamiliar type, and he kept calling her, in his own mind, a Scythian woman, while he got through the first formalities with what ease he might, asking himself all the time what subjects he was likely to have in common with such a hostess.

As she was an invalid, he began by hoping that a winter at Nice had been beneficial to her health. "Not too much so," she answered, rather curtly: and it seemed as if not even the subject of her ailments—one on which she was generally abundantly fluent—could induce the Aunt Pascha to relax toward the Crimean hero, for so in her mind she had already christened him. She detested the English—English men and English soldiers in particular; and here, in her very drawing-room, and as a friend of Véra's, was an Englishman, a one-armed man, a Crimean hero, of whom she felt convinced that he had killed, and eaten, Heaven only knew how many of her compatriots. And then how the man looked at Véra! devouring her with his eyes. He had no little presumption certainly; but then what business had Véra had at his incoming to blush one of her rare blushes? Countess Pascha was very angry with them both, and Lord Kendal found her unpracticable, when, having recovered from her first snub, he said that, in a winter when so many Russians were collected at Nice, she must surely have found the society agreeable.

No, she had not enjoyed it. The society of Nice was now, to say the least of it, extremely mixed. Her health did not allow her to go out at night, and the weather had been trying, with so much sirocco; and then the situation of their house was bad.

"Too sunny, perhaps," suggested Lord Kendal, glancing at the closed blinds, outside of which the fierce white heat was still beating, reflecting all the glare of the Promenade, and all the glitter of the sea.

"Yes, too sunny, and I do not like being so near the sea; it is terrifying how one hears the waves at night, and they have a frightful monotony."

Besides all this, Countess Zotoff objected that they had not the whole house to themselves. There was a Piedmontese family overhead, who had given a ball, and, as she thought the floor unsafe, she had been kept awake all night; and those people were quite Garibaldian in the society they collected about them: not at all to her taste, though Véra must needs go to their dance. Then on the ground-floor there were some English people, and the boys trundled hoops, and chattered under her windows.

"They are rather nice little boys," put in Véra, who was so much gratified by Lord Kendal's visit, that she would have taken a favorable view of a pair of young gorillas had they been presented to her, and who also saw with vexation that her duenna was by no means disposed to show the best side of her character to their visitor.

"Oh, they are dreadful children! I never like foreigners, as you know, Véra, and yet you make of these *gamins*."

"Do you talk to them in English?" asked Lord Kendal.

"Yes; and as they laugh at my mistakes without mercy, I ought to make progress. Do you not find me improved?"

"It was I, and not you, who needed correction the last time that we met, princess," and Véra smiled such an enchanting pardon, that it was lucky for her that Countess Pascha did not see her, being engaged at that moment in arranging Marphise more comfortably in her basket. That amiable animal refused, however, to settle, and turned from time to time such fiery glances on the stranger that they augured a dash before long at his lordship's heels.

"I fear the accounts from the Villa Bermont, to-day, are such as to make every one very uneasy."

"*Hélas!*" said the elder lady, and again Véra lifted her soft, pitying eyes, so that Lord Kendal felt he might address her on that topic. They discussed the bulletin and the funeral of Count Orloff, until the visitor rose to go.

"You were singing, I think, when I came in, and I ought not to interrupt you any longer."

"I was only trying to promote a siesta on the part of my aunt; the heat is so oppressive to-day, in spite of the thunderstorm."

"I never sleep in the middle of the day," protested the Countess Pascha, who, in spite of this protest, was well known to sleep fourteen hours, on an average, out of the twenty-four.

"What was the music?—it sounded like Schubert's."

"You are right, it is very like Schubert; but it is a romance of Varlàmoff's. Do you know it?" and going to the piano Véra bent down, still standing, and played a few bars.

"Ah! the words are Russian, I see."

"Yes; but I have made some German ones for it."

"Which are quite disfiguring, I think," put in Countess Pascha. "German is another language that I detest. Lérmontoff was a Russian, and what is more, a poet; your words are German prose."

"German poetry without rhyme, please, Aunt Pascha."

"It is all one—all German is prosaic."

"Lérmontoff's poem," continued Véra, "would make a pretty subject for an artist—he says that a soul, having heard before its birth the songs of the guardian angel who bore it down to this world, never was afterward satisfied by any earthly strains."

"That I can quite believe; but I must not intrude on you any longer. Are we to meet at Lady P——'s concert to-night? I trust so."

"Yes," replied Véra, looking extremely pleased.

"I am very glad to have found you at home, and to have seen you to-day," and then Véra touched the hand of the maimed man, which she never did without a sense of pity, and Lord Kendal took leave. Her manner showed that his tacit apology had been as tacitly accepted, and he left the house in good spirits.

"My dear Véra, how very unfeeling you are!" began Countess Zotoff, as soon as the door had closed on the visitor. "It is curious that on one of my worst days you should so carelessly present to me, and in my own drawing-room, and as a friend of your own, a foreigner of a sort that is sure to be obnoxious to my heart; and, what is more, this man is paying court to you."

"Do you really think so?" asked Véra, trying to keep her voice steady.

"Do I really think so? Véra Michailovna, anybody not born yesterday, as you always pretend to be, would think so. Why else should he come here? and at an hour when the heat brings out nobody but mad dogs, and Englishmen, and lizards. Give me some of that Hungary-water, child! And where did the man lose his arm?"

"At Inkermann, I believe; and he has the Victoria Cross for some gallantry at the Alma."

"I was sure of it; he looks like a fire-eater. That man frightened me, Véra."

"Did he? He always seems to me to be so much out of spirits."

"Bah! the English are all like that—they are insupportable—and, depend upon it, he has committed some crime. He is a *Eugen Arame* (sic). These English are so barbarous. All the time he was here I said to myself, 'Now, how can I tell that this is not the man who killed my son?'"

"Oh! my dear aunt! what a perfectly horrible notion! Pray do not even speak of such a thing."

"Very likely he is the man. Alexis was not killed with the bayonet or musket, you know that; he was hit with a pistol-ball. Only officers carried revolvers, *ergo*, an officer killed him—why not this officer? I am sure he looks like a *bourreau*. What a sombre fire he has in his eyes!"

"He suffers great pain from his arm, I believe—at least, he did so: for, in Rome, I remember that mamma used to prescribe for his neuralgia."

"Ah! neuralgia; well, one could not wish one's worst enemy a more frightful punishment than that. And what is his name?"

"He is the Earl of Kendal."

"Yes, yes; but what is his Christian, or his surname?"

"Collingwood, Henry St. John."

"Collingwood! *qu'est que c'est que cela?* Is that a Christian name? and after what saint may one be called *Collingvode*, I pray you?"

"I think Henry is a Christian name, and that Collingwood is the name of an English family—perhaps that of his mother, whose only child he was."

"Horrid! conceive not having a Christian name; why, if that man had been killed in battle, his mother would not have known how to pray for him, nor have had a saint to intercede for him!"

"His mother died when he was seven years old; and, besides, the English do not pray for their dead; it is an omission which they make."

"Not pray for the dead? why, this is worse and worse; but these English are pagans in their customs—heathens, I should call them. Then he does not so much as pray for his dead mother any more than she would have done for him? What should I have done, Véra Michailovna, through all these years, if I could not have prayed for my son, and that in the name of his patron, Alexis the servant of God?* Does your friend think a *Collingvode* can serve him in heaven? No wonder he looks *triste*. However, the English are all like that. And I am sure that he felt guilty toward me; did you remark how little *entrain* he had in conversation?"

"Yes," answered Véra, demurely, remembering how Lord Kendal had been snubbed by her chaperon, and suspecting, also, that if there had been any "guilty feeling" it might have been with herself that he had been a little embarrassed. She was glad, at any rate, that the conversation was at an end, and she went to her own room to rehearse undisturbed all her joy, and to realize the conviction which this day had brought her, of Lord Kendal's strong regard for herself.

She had been much hurt by his speech of yesterday, for there is no pain like the harsh misunderstanding of those we love; it always seems so wilful and so wanton; but then, if what *la tante* Pascha said was true, and if he was really paying serious court to her now, was it not rather he who might complain of being often misunderstood? How often had she misinterpreted his feelings and his sayings! how often must she have appeared ungrateful for his constant and very great kindness to herself! Those grave, kind cares for her happiness, that question in Rome, the sympathy he had

* S. Alexis, 27th Metropolitan of Moscow, 1353 to 1380.

shown her in London, when they met again after her mother's death, his much thought for her then, and at all times; if those were all proofs of love, how obdurate he must have thought her, how stupid, or how proud—so proud that she must be sought only on bended knee! No, that she was not.

If he loved her, if he really had chosen her out of all the women in the world to bear his name, let him ask her, and she would be loyal and open with him. But how would he ask? Would he speak to her father for her, or, English fashion, would he woo for himself? And if so, when? They were to meet to-night at a concert at Lady P——'s, perhaps for the last time; for the news from the Villa Bermont was now very bad; what if she went into mourning, and so they never met again, as in London after that drive home from Richmond, when her heart had first gone out in love to him, and to his English country? What if they were never to understand each other, but to drift away, having only met to part, like those shepherds of the Russian plains, who, in the national songs, meet, tell each other a little of their history in a wild, plaintive strain, that has no closing chord, and then, as the singers part, never to see each other again, the echo of their *complaints* dies away over the flat steppes? There are lives like that, that end without concluding; and was her life to be like a Scythian shepherd's song? She trusted not—she who had such need of a home, of a friend, of love, and of warmth, and of some one to protect and cherish her.

And, as Véra soliloquized, she stood by the open window, picking at a great bunch of roses, and letting their leaves fall through her fingers in showers, less reading in her nosegay, like Faust's *Marguerite*, than seeming to shower along with them all her treasures of the heart on some beloved head. As she did so she smiled.

"Friend, well-beloved, dearest," she murmured to herself, sighing softly between each endearing word, till she whispered another name, a nearer and a dearer one—"husband!" She lisped this slowly in English, like a child trying over her lesson, then, shaking her head, "What husband?" she asked; "I shall probably never have one;" and then she sighed again, and dropped her head on the broad window-sill, and there, I believe that, like Sarah of old, she laughed.

She remained all the afternoon in her room, thinking much and long: she did more than think, she prayed. This pure and noble lady gave thanks to Him who, feeding the ravens when they cry, seemed ready to feed also a hungry human heart, and to give to it, as to the year, and to the fair earth, spring, and new riches, and a new life. Oh! fair sweet hope; oh! fair sweet day of God that saw such hope dawn on her loneliness; oh! joy of the whole soul, to win the love of a noble heart, and the worship of a pure and loyal life. Had this thing really come to her, who in the great world of courts and chicane, gallantry and extravagance, vice, play, *ennui*, and dishonor, had been too often ordered to find a husband? She had tried to do a duty by her father, but he did not really need her; and only He who had made the heart could tell how very lonely hers had been. And now this joy had come to her—to little Véra—when royal hearts were breaking, and while steam-horses were bringing the father and the bride to see a prince die whose heritage was the eighth part of the globe. Dying! Yes; Nicholai Alexandrovitch was dying now. Not prayers of millions, not tears of sovereigns, not skill of leeches, not the great frigates in the roadstead, and not all the gallant guards of France, had been able to keep death out of that garden. There, among the pansies and the orange-flowers, under the date-palm, and among

these blossoms which yearly, through the Passion and the Easter-tide, blush for the treason of Judas, and for the humiliation of the Redeemer, Death had lain in wait, and at his incoming—crying, "Lo! this is their heir"—had kissed Nicholas, the Czar's son, ere the third hour of the day.

"Death for them, and life for me," Véra continued, "and crown of life, my love!" and, as she said this, her face was covered with sweet blushes: she hid it in her palms, and there, under their cover, and in no audible words, her heart made its most lowly confession, and its supreme surrender. It was now, and forever, and, whenever he chose to ask for it, it should be known to be, his. To-night they would meet.

"Julie," she called to her maid, "Princess Kourbsky calls for me at ten: give me a white dress this evening."

"Which, *princesse*, white with azalias, or the toilet with the swallows?"

"The swallows," answered her mistress, who then went to dinner, blessing inwardly the English whose Easter came earlier than her own, and who could give a concert even while her *Héritier* was dangerously ill.

Prince Michael, who had brought an unfavorable bulletin from the Villa Bermont, declined being of the party at Lady P——'s, and Véra made her toilet alone, with rather solemn and nervous thoughts. This evening would probably decide her fate, for she was not likely to go out again, and, if the Czarewitch died, there would be an instant scatter of the whole Russian colony in Nice. Then she might return to St. Petersburg, and recommence, after the pompous, melancholy funeral there, the weary round of life in the capital. That funeral would, under such circumstances, be simply that of her own youth, and she had better take herself out of her father's way, let him marry Countess Pascha, and go herself to the Novi Dévitchi.* If her life was always to be out of season, the sooner it settled into that changeless sleep the better: a spring without leafage, and a summer without flowers, would make an autumn without fruits; so, then, let it be winter, once and for all.

Such thoughts chased each other through Princess Véra's head while her maid dressed her, and twisted about, in cunning hands, the rolls of her yellow hair.

"Look at yourself, *princesse*," she said at last; for her young mistress had gone through the whole operation mechanically.

Then Véra got up and looked, and the girl who had just been anticipating for herself a premature winter of life stood before her mirror the impersonation of spring. Her white dress was covered with swallows worked in black Brussels lace, swallows were embroidered on her broad white sash and on her breast-knots, and among the rolls of her hair was a swallow, seated on a small pink spray of almond-blossom.

"The princess is right," Julie began —"is right to have chosen this dress to-night; it is the last time that she can wear it; we are already near the end of April, and by May swallows would be horribly out of season, and *rococo:* it becomes her very well, however;" and with that she cloaked Princess Véra, and lighted her down to the carriage. Countess Pascha had come back late from church, had dined without spinach, which she liked on *maigre* days, felt poorly and rather hungry, was cross, and had gone early to bed.

* New Maids, i. e., girls' Convent.

CHAPTER XXIII.

NADIR.

Schweigt, ihr Wogen und Möwen!
Vorüber ist Alles: Glück und Hoffnung,
Hoffnung und Liebe: ich liege am Boden,
Ein öder schiffbruchiger Mann:
Und drücke mein glühendes Antlitz,
In den feuchten Sand.

H. Heine.

When Véra and her chaperon of this evening, Princess Kourbsky, entered Lady P——'s apartment, there were a number of men collected in the anteroom, in honor of two tables at which cards were being played. In fact, this outer room contained the greater part of the elderly males of the society, who had made good their escape from the music. A select party of its younger members were rather noisy at tea in the *cabinet jaune;* but in the large centre *salon* a perfect silence reigned, because there a French comic song was being sung, or rather performed, by two very stout young men, who were twins. One of these thumped a small, upright, and very harsh piano, and looked savagely intent on the chords which he struck with his rather dirty, stumpy fingers. The other, with one of his dirty, stumpy thumbs stuck under his armpit, had contorted a pale and puffy face into a really very comical grin, above which a thin and well-waxed mustache stuck out like the whiskers of a cat. Just as the fair and shapely figure of the young Russian lady appeared in the doorway, and her eyes fell on these performers, there was a more than ordinarily terrific crash made by the pianiste, and then the singing twin broke triumphantly into the refrain of his song:

Hah! c'est un bien plaisant animal, } *bis.*
Qu'un mari à un bal!

"Isn't he delicious?" said two very young ladies, who sat on a sofa near the door; but, as their dresses had an unmistakable *cachet* of Marshall and Snellgrove, it may be hoped that their knowledge of French was not such as to follow with perfect accuracy the mixture of gabble, *argot*, and vulgarity, of which this French comic song consisted.

To the relief of those who did, there succeeded a Pole, who, with hair in admired disorder, executed one of Chopin's weirdest melodies. It was not unlike a valse, if one can imagine a valse where the dancers are under some evil enchantment and bewitched, or, perhaps, like too many of our countrymen, are dancing in chains. Then came Alary's pretty "*A vingt Ans,*" really redolent of spring, and of the morning-song of birds; then a quartet (classical), and then another comic interlude; for concerts are always arranged so as to suit the taste of Mr. Titmouse, who, when he had to choose between grave music and gay, begged, as we all know, for "a little of both." When the fierce twins had done, a chorus from Faust brought the performance to a close; and Véra and Lord Kendal, as they moved into the supper-room, congratulated themselves that the musical entertainment was at an end. Both of them, in feeling and understanding that this was their last chance of being alone together, perhaps even of meeting, had grudged the hours devoted to what Lord Kendal called the fiendish twins; yet, yet now that they might have talked, there was quite as much silence as speech between them, while Véra sipped her chocolate, and, I fear, let her eyes betray a good deal of the thoughts which had occupied her since they parted last at five o'clock. Countess Zotoff's name was accidentally mentioned, and then Lord Kendal said he feared he had paid her rather an inopportune visit to-day. Véra answered no; but that, as Countess Prascovia was a nervous invalid, the weather told much on her spirits.

"She does not, as you see, go out with me, and I do not think that she cares much for general society; perhaps she lost the habit of it during her two long periods of mourning, and she has

not here any of her old friends, or *habitués*, who in Moscow really amuse her. Besides," Véra added, with a rather apologetic smile—"besides, I think that I ought perhaps to have warned you that she is very national in all her ideas and feelings; and I am sure," and here the smile faded, and Véra lifted up such pleading eyes—"I am sure you would more than excuse any want of cordiality toward a—foreigner, I mean an Englishman—if you know how much she—I mean we—she suffered during the war in the Crimea."

"Why should you hesitate to say that to me?"

"Oh, because—you too have paid so dearly—" and she glanced hesitatingly at his empty sleeve.

"He smiled at her, and went on: "That is a sad chapter in the history of many families, I can assure you; and our country is so small that the blanks show there more than they can do in Russia."

"But then our loss was so much greater. Ah! one must have lived in Russia through those three years to know what the war was to us. My cousin Alexis was but one out of hundreds of our friends who left us, never to return: and his being an only son made the blow so much more terrible to a mother who was already a widow."

"I can feel for you; for at Inkermann, besides a young half-brother, so young as to be like my son, I lost twenty comrades, officers of our Household troops. This young man was your cousin?"

"We called each other cousins, because we have always called Countess Prascovia aunt—she was born Obolensky—and really is a relative of my father's, but *we* were not really cousins, else they had not talked of uniting us; for in Russia, you know, cousins do not marry?"

"That was intended?"

"It was spoken of; and I am sure it would have been had we been older. Alexis was but nineteen. He pleased every one, for he was so good. He was brave, and bright, and sunny, and when he volunteered in 1854, fresh from the Corps des Pages, he did wonders. He raised a hundred men on his estates, and he led them with courage, and he was adored by all, for he was so kind and brave?"

"Do you mean that he went to the East as a volunteer?"

"Yes, with the regiment of the Moscow militia, to the Crimea. His was the hundred of Kalomna. They went from Odessa at last, to Sebastopol, just before the battle of Inkermann. His last letters to his mother were full of energy and life. Ah, poor Alexis! no wonder that we have never ceased to deplore him, and that his mother finds it so hard to forgive!"

"He was killed, do you say?"

"At Inkermann—and oh! so painfully! He was not wounded with a musket, or by a bayonet-thrust, but must have been shot with a pistol. He was found dead, from cold and loss of blood. The ball went through the right lung. His mother believes that he was picked out as an officer, and deliberately shot at. It may have been so, for he was tall (taller than I, the last time that we measured), and very fair, and so perhaps easily distinguished, though in the militia the men and the officers wore the same dress—our national one, with the high boots, and the red sash; and they had the same *casquettes*—how do you say it in English—kepi?—Caps, I suppose? It may have been thus, but I wish that his mother did not think so, for it seems to make his death more painful; and every English officer whom she sees she thinks may, perhaps, have fired that too fatal shot. And then you know my aunt's strong religious views, and that, to her, a death without the last prayers and the sacraments was terrible. Nor were there any last words. No friend saw him die; he was found beside some

of his men. We had no message from him—none; and there were no tokens to receive! for—and it is very horrid—the body, do you know, was really found rifled of its ornaments, stripped of its baptismal cross, which all our men wear, and of its militia badge—a little eight-pointed gold cross, with their motto, '*Za Vérou i Tzarjà*,' worn in front of the cap. So, can you wonder that, whenever my aunt is reminded of that fatal field, her nerves suffer? You, I am sure, who lost a brother there, will forgive her."

Véra, expecting after her explanation a kind and sympathizing answer, looked at Lord Kendal, who was just rising from his place on the sofa beside her.

He did not answer her, but he leaned heavily, with his only hand, on the arm of the sofa. He stooped, and his face, grown curiously gray, and peaked, was bending over her own. Not a word of answer did he give: only looked her in the eyes, with the hungry, steady, all-comprehending gaze of a man who looks his last for this world.

"Good-by," at last he said, curtly, and hoarsely. "Good-by, Véra." But that last word died away on his lips, and it never reached her ear.

She, mute and drooping, sat statue-like. She saw him bow to her, and saw him leave the room.

He left the room, the house, the street, and the town. Striding on like a man who runs from his pursuers, Lord Kendal walked on. It was past midnight, the streets were empty, and the skies serene, and he held on till, on coming to the torrent of the Maignan, he turned sharp to the right, and, still at the same rapid pace, ascending the valley of the St. Madelaine, he plunged into the woods. Then the vine-terraces began, but on he went, looking straight before him, till he reached the top of a hill, and then, sitting down, breathless and stunned, he faced the valley and the distant and moonlit sea.

And he faced the situation.

All the time that he had been walking, the blood had rung and surged so in his ears, that he had seemed to have but a partial sense of the truth. Now he saw it, felt it, and heard it; and there, for three hours of unbroken silence and solitude, he saw, felt, and heard nothing else.

With what extraordinary irony had life so frequently brought together two people who could never be one! His hope of personal happiness was gone with Véra; and, though, maybe, he was too wise and brave a man to suppose that that was the all-in-all, and had lived too long to suppose that he was the only man to whom it had ever happened, still the pang was sharp, and now that she was gone, he felt too strangely and bitterly forlorn.

He looked round him on the silent olive-woods with their gray and whispering shade, and their boles that recall the old classical tale of the king foredoomed by the gods to terrible crimes, and to still more terrible woes.* Had this tragedy really been prepared for him? Seemingly so, for, time after time, this Russian girl had been brought to his side, and time after time she had touched the hand which had taken her cousin's life. It was really destiny. Nothing could repair it, and Fate was not in the nineteenth century to be propitiated, even under these olive-trees, by any triple libation of water and honey, or of triple olive-sprays thrice laid "with low-voiced, modest words of prayer." This thing was irretrievable, an irremediable sorrow, an unspeakable loss.

Then there was before him the odious task of incriminating himself in the eyes of the woman he loved, of relating to her not only the odious fact that he had accidentally dealt the death-wound to this young cousin Alexis, but also of trying to make Véra understand why the wishes

* View mortal man, none ever will you find,
If the gods force him, that can shun his fate.
Œdipus at Colonus.—POTTER'S *Translation.*

of the dying boy had never been fulfilled by him.

But how describe to her the effects of a brain-fever, of seventeen weeks of shipboard, of delirium, of suffering, and of prostrate weakness? How, without dwelling on himself, and so bringing much before her notice the man who was guilty of her young lover's blood?

Here, as Lord Kendal sat on the hill-top, the whole scene came back to him, as it had not done for years. The hill-side, the raw misty rain, the roar of the conflict, the boy's bright curls, his curious national dress, his blue eyes, his long white hands as he had unfastened the cross from his cap, his frank kindly smile, the little bit of black bread he had offered, his graceful English speech, and his fortitude in the near prospect of death, as the blood burst again and again from his mouth, and choked his few labored words. Lord Kendal saw it all again, and the sloping valley beneath him here, with its countless trees of peach, and nectarine, and almond, turned into the Crimean ravines; and Memory, wakened now from her long trance, rehearsed word for word Count Alexis's message, and the names—Prascovia Borisovna Zotoff, and Véra Michailovna Zamiàtine.

The two unlucky crosses were in his dressing-case, now at Maison Jaume: and there was nothing left for him to do now but to enclose them to the princess, and to say, as simply as possible, how they had been given into his hands, and why they had not, ten years ago, found their way to hers.

The thing must be done, and the sooner the better; and then the sooner he left Nice the better for himself, for he must not see her again.

"My Véra!" he said to himself; and then tenderness, regret, and a sort of wild rebellion at his fate, seized upon him with fierce pangs, and shook a man whom the din of battle and the horrors of a hospital had been but little able to move. Hers had seemed to him the sweetest face in all the world, and the sweetest nature too—child and woman, he had never heard a harsh or an evil word from her lips; unsunned snow was not more naturally and spotlessly pure and chaste than she; and this very night he had believed that she loved him, and that he had read this in her tender smile, and guessed at last the "blue riddle" * of her eyes. What an unutterable dolt he had been! Then, as he saw himself a man, stained in Véra's sight with her boy-lover's blood, and always old enough, as he said, to have been her father, jealousy awoke—jealousy of the dead Alexis, of Véra's youth, of her patriotism, of her religion, and of her whole past. He called himself there an unlucky and a hopeless fool.

Meantime, it was four o'clock, and before long his sister's household would be afoot, and he might be missed. He must get up, and go home, and write. It really was time to go home; for the valley, so dark and shadowy when he had plunged into it at midnight, was lightening now with the day, and the blossoms showed as rosy as were the clouds that chased each other out of the east.

With a low rustling wind, that first rippled the poplar-leaves, then whispered among the resinous pines, and finally died away about the hill-tops in a sigh, the morning had come in. The day was making, and at last, as with a shout, and from above the castle hill that bears the name of Νίκη (victory), the sun shot up victorious; the birds awoke, butterflies danced among the flowering beans, and countless bees flew past to revel among the cistus, and the lavender, and all the flowering trees. Then the houses seemed to come to life, and here and there a faint blue curl of smoke stole up into the air. Mule-bells tinkled, as the peasants came down some steep, terraced path on their way to labor; in the cane-brakes near the oil-mill, some children were singing:

* Was bedeuten diese süssen blauen Räthsel?
H. Heine.

and, as Lord Kendal went down the hill to join the roadway, the bells of the church of Sainte Madelaine rang for the early mass.

He was chill, weary, stiff, and sick at heart, and he walked slowly, casting in his mind the letter that must be written to Princess Véra; perhaps, also, there was an unconscious wish on his part to delay a little the evil hour and the last step; for, till that letter was written and read, all was not over; once it was so, and the simple truth told, he could only leave the place.

When he reached the level ground in front of the church, he paused, and, moved by I know not what impulse of piety, curiosity, reluctance, or fatigue, he went in, and stood just inside the porch.

An old priest, and the ragged, olive-faced little urchin who served him, were at the altar, with their backs to a congregation of about a dozen peasants.

Suddenly the old priest joined his hands, wheeled round on the altar-step, and said in a loud, clear voice, "Oremus"—let us pray.

It was well said; when love and hope are over, honor, life, and duty remain, only, "Let us pray!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

BREAKING THE NEWS.

Ophelia. I was the more deceived.

In spite of a whole night's consideration, that letter was not the less difficult to write; the more so, because, after meeting his family at breakfast, it really seemed to Lord Kendal, when he again sat alone, that the whole wretchedness of that night had been a dream, the phantasmagoria of fever, or a trick of the fancy: any thing, in short, but what it was—an unalterably terrible fate.

He would not open his mind on the subject to his sister, he would wait till the play was played out, of which only one act remained to be performed; but, in the mean time, he had announced to her his intention of going for the rest of the week to San Remo and Mentone, giving as his reason Mrs. St. John's wish to visit those places, and the cessation of all society in Nice, owing to the hopeless illness of the Czarewitch. So to Mentone they would go that afternoon—but there was that letter to be written first. Well, he would write it; and, as he would beg Princess Véra not to answer it, and also leave the place, the agony would, at least, be cut short; he could not meet her, and he should be spared any possible anxiety about a reply.

He wrote, and I fear that jealousy dictated to him. Perhaps a more curious document never was penned than this letter, for it was as unimpassioned, and as purely historical a narrative, as if it had been written by a third person, and not by the man most interested in that accident on the field of Inkermann, and in its painful consequences. He added a short, and very simple account of his brain-fever, and of the many weeks of shipboard and hospital, during which period all memory of the names mentioned by his victim had unluckily escaped from him. He said what a grief this had been to him: so much so that, through all the rewards which his sovereign had been pleased to bestow on him, the possession of those Russian relics had been to him a real and a lasting pain. He now restored them to the hands for which they were intended, and he could only hope, rather than expect, that those circumstances would be understood, and forgiven, which had, through too many years, prevented the fulfilment of a dying wish. "This letter," he continued, "requires no answer;—it must be, princess, a painful one for you to receive, and, I fear, that it may be also a troublesome one for you to read. For its blurred pages I must plead as my excuse, that on the field,

which was so fatal to your cousin and to my brother, I had also the misfortune to lose an arm.—I have the honor to remain, yours very faithfully,

"KENDAL."

Princess Véra, after a sleepless night of the most novel and harassing anxiety, had risen, and she was sitting in her room about eleven o'clock, wrapped in a *peignoir*, and with her hair hanging on her shoulders, too restless to do any thing, and yet without energy enough to finish her toilet, or go out, as she generally did before breakfast. She heard the door-bell of their apartment ring, and, two minutes after, Julie appeared, with a small packet in her hand, which, after one sharp look at her mistress's nervous face, the maid delivered to her, and then left the room.

Véra's prophetic spirit told her its contents from the moment she held it in her hands, and all the worst and most horrible fears of a night so full of horrors were confirmed. She opened the packet, standing by the table, and, at the sight of these tokens from a long-dead man, a sickening faintness took hold of her. Yet, yet, there was life in her heart. The fate was cruel, but it had been only a chance—oh! that surely had been only a chance which had made her Henry guilty of even a seeming cruelty. But what did he say? And she sat down to read the letter, smiling a faint ghost of a smile, as she touched the sheet that had come fresh from her lover's hand.

She read, and read on, and the blood began to sing in her ears. She turned to the third page—fever, hospital, regrets: she read all about them there, and her heart beat thicker and louder. Then there was the last page, and, when she had read it down to the signature, her heart seemed to stop, and there came a loud whirring noise in her head, and a blank blackness before her eyes; and when Julie, hearing a sound, ran in, she found her young mistress fallen between the table and the bed, and lying, like a snow-wreath, all her fair white length upon the floor.

"Thank you, my good friends," said the princess, when, on recovering consciousness, she found herself lying on the bed, with Julie and Vassilissa beside her—"thank you, I am not worth all the trouble I give. Leave me for a quarter of an hour—I must be alone; and then, Julie, beg the prince, my father, to come to me here."

Wonderful is the calm of a great nature in the first hours of a great shock. The deep soul that can suffer terrible pangs is not the less an impregnable fortress. There is a garrison there that cannot be exhausted; and, attack it where and when you will, and make what breaches you can in its walls, those breaches are always to be found manned. So was it with the great and sweet spirit of my princess.

When Michael Zamiàtine did what he had not done perhaps more than thrice in his life—when he came into his daughter's room—he found Véra still lying on the bed, in her *peignoir*, with a white Archangel shawl over her feet, deadly pale, but as calm as a seraph.

"Good God! child, how like your mother you are looking this morning! are you ill, that you have sent for me?"

"Not ill, my father, but only shaken. This is a very painful matter" — and she handed him the two crosses, and the still open letter.

The really indifferent handwriting of the one-armed Englishman obliged Prince Michael to spell out the pages with difficulty, and, while he did so, Véra, lying motionless, dropped through her fingers some beads of her rosary. The poor child was trying to steady herself by prayer, as she had often seen her mother do, for, in the extremes of bodily anguish, Anna Feodorovna would often do this, saying, "God, my child, likes to hear our love, and not our cries." But Véra soon found that her

thoughts slipped away, as the deadly faintness crept over her again, and then, unable to form any longer petition, she murmured only, "*Slava tiebè Gospódi!*" (Glory to God!) Like a martyr of old, she sang praise in her agony to Him who, in unerring wisdom, permits the temporary suffering of His children. But Nature will have her way, and at last she could only moan out, "*Ach ti Gospódi!*" (O Lord!), and then burst into a passion of weeping.

"What did you say, my child?"

"*Nitchévo*" (nothing), she answered, and, hiding her face now in the pillows, she wept on.

Prince Michael had read with frowning brows, and, now that he had read all, he walked once or twice up and down the room. Man though he was, he saw and had seen for some time how the wind set, and he had thoroughly approved of Véra's choice, while he perhaps was also anxious to see her married before he brought a second wife to the house.

But here was a terrible break-up. And here, two rooms off, and talking of her aches and her ails to Doctor Prosch, was Countess Zotoff, ready to go off in a fury about her son, and also ready, as he well knew, to accept of a hand which he had very nearly offered her twenty-nine years before. But even if, putting Countess Zotoff's feelings out of the question, Véra might have been found willing to forget this disastrous accident of ten years ago, and to marry the Englishman, his was not a lover's letter—not a word did those four pages contain about Lord Kendal's own feeling for Véra, if he had any. He seemed to take it for granted that here all intimacy was to cease between himself and the Zamiàtine family, and in assuming this he had not subjoined one word of comment. Had he ever cared for Véra?—so her father asked himself, or had it been all a delusion—philandering, and habit, and courtesy, and *cour de salon*, and no courtship intended at any time? Véra, at any rate, seemed to think so now, for she was weeping as if her heart would break, and Prince Michael, who hated the sight of tears, only wished that he knew of any thing to do for her.

"Will you tell Aunt Pascha?" said Véra feebly, and then Prince Michael, who was not great in resource, felt that this had been the thing he had all along wished to do for his daughter, and so, gathering up the relics and the letter, he forthwith betook himself to Countess Zotoff's rooms, to break the unpleasant news to her.

No need to describe the blundering but well-meaning periphrases which he employed for that purpose. They were not of much use, nor were they long required, for no sooner was Countess Pascha put on the scent than her mind darted on the truth, and, springing to her feet, she screamed with rage and sorrow. "My Alexis! my golden child! my only son! oh, that butcher, that murderer! and he has sat in this house, and there is no one who will kill him for me!" Her elderly adorer showed, I must confess, no symptoms of blood-thirstiness at the moment. "Aleoshinka! *ach* Aleoshinka *moj; ach ti dusha moja!* (Oh thou soul of mine!) *Ach* Aleoshinka!" and in strong hysterics, Countess Pascha had to be handed over to the care of her two handmaids.

With what appetite the master of that house sat down to breakfast may be supposed. He had Véra weeping in one room, Countess Zotoff shrieking in another, and the maids, it must be added, quarrelling in a third; for no sooner had Marussia on the one hand, and Julie on the other, been put in possession of the sad facts, than the long-smothered animosity between these two servants broke out. Marussia, bigot of bigots, would gladly have burned, not only the English misbeliever, but also the princess who was so unnatural as to love a foreigner, the man who had killed her Alexei Dimitrivitch. If she had been his nurse, or his mother, so she declared, she could

not have loved him better. "The pigeon, the red sun, the beautiful one! To think that he had been killed by those English butchers: oh! the murderers, the heretics, the Jews, the swine of misbegotten unbelievers! This very 9th of March, the Feast of the Forty Blessed Martyrs, had she not seen his face in a dream? her Alexei Dimitrivitch, her deceased master's son—might the kingdom of heaven be his (as it surely was)—and was not that dream sent to her to warn her that the murderer was among them? the traitor, the German, the hog, the butcher, the Jew! making love here to his own bride that should have been. Evil be the hour that had brought that monster to this house! and evil be the day that had ever brought them to this place!"

"*Taisez-vous!*" (hold your tongue!) scolded Julie, in a shrill treble. "You know nothing about it. This man, who was a friend of the princess's mother for years, is a noble gentleman. He is a worthy man, and brave, and he is a peer of England, and a better match than a dozen of your dirty Russian gentlemen. *Paff!* I know what I say. I am thirty-six years of age, *sans compter les mois de nourrice* (without counting the months at nurse). I was not born yesterday, no, nor the day before. I have been in England twice, and I have friends in England; the cook at the embassy is my friend, a Gascon, and a young man of merit. I know what the English are at home, and there are, I tell you, no gentlemen like the English. It is not they who have vermin in their houses at home, who take up with actresses, or who play away their money at Baden-Baden and at Monaco, as your Russians do. Where is your Prince Serge Donskoï now? Ah! the *mauvais sujet!* I tell you I had rather see my young lady married to milord than to any Russian that ever was born, the Grand-duke *Héritier y compris* (included).

"Hear the heretic! when the blessed Czarewitch is on his death-bed. And you, who would give the princess to a murderer, do not consider so much as that her aunt, the Sudarinia (the lady), is alive."

"Alive? yes, I know that madame your countess is alive, and in spite of her doctors, and vespers, and tea, she is likely to be alive. And, what is more, we are likely to hear more of her; and, if my poor young mistress does not get her for a step-mother before six months are out, I am not called Julie Lagrange, and I will throw my tongue to the dogs."

"And the best place for it, too, when you can speak such slanders, Julie Lagrange.—And you, Vassilissa, why do sit there as silent as a fish? Are you going also to take her part against your own mistress, and for the murderer of Alexei Dimitrivitch, who is with the saints?"

Vassilissa, being a tender-hearted young person, and yet practical withal, had, after weighing the matter duly, given a silent vote in favor of Véra, and had decided in her own mind that a living suitor was worth more than the dead hero, who might, moreover, fairly be supposed to be compensated now for all earthly wrongs in the society of his patron, "Alexis, the servant of God," and of a whole company of saintly personages, whom Vassilissa venerated highly, although she did not presume to be as well versed in their histories as were some of her betters. So to this eloquent appeal of Marussia's she only replied by wiping away with her apron tears that might have been supposed to be shed upon both or either sides of the question; and then, having finished ironing a petticoat, she withdrew, leaving the angry disputants to fight it out between them, which, indeed, they were well able to do, having always a large stock of vituperatives at their disposal—in several languages.

Most silent, and most unhappy, through that day, and through all following days, was Princess Véra; for that

Lord Kendal did not love her, and that he had never loved her, had become, since the reading of his letter, her fixed idea; and, like Ophelia, she felt that she had been "the more deceived."

Her father, though generally busy in or about the Villa Bermont, did manage to answer Lord Kendal's letter; that is to say, he wrote, in his stiff, crabbed hand, and somewhere about the middle of a square sheet of paper (which must therefore have looked uncommonly like a *lettre pour faire part*), as follows:

"The Princess Véra Michailovna Zamiàtine begs to thank Lord Kendal for a packet which reached her to-day, the 20th of April, 1865."

That was all, and Lord Kendal found it on the following Monday, when Mrs. St. John, tired of the ruralities of Mentone, brought him reluctantly back to Nice. He was most unwilling to return to the town, but, once there, he was seized with the most devouring wish, the most insane desire, to see Véra again. One way of doing so alone offered itself. The poor Czarewitch, who had died on Sunday, would lie in state on one day of this week; there would be a function, and there he would take his chance, even if he had to wait half the day for it, of seeing the princess again.

Of this determination, and of his presence in Nice, Véra knew nothing. To her all was over. Yes, when the Scythian shepherds cease their singing on the wide steppes, not an echo even of their song remains. She had thought of that before, and so it was now. Like those notes her hopes had vanished, and the wind passing over them had carried all them away, into the limbo of foolish and unfinished things.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LYING IN STATE.

Take the last kiss: the last forever,
Yet render thanks amid the gloom:
He, severed from his home and kindred,
Is passing onward to the tomb—
For earthly labors, earthly pleasures,
And carnal joys, he cares no more;
Where are his kinsfolk and acquaintance?
They stand upon another shore.
Let us say, around him pressed,
"Grant him, Lord, eternal rest."

Stichera of the Last Kiss.—Dr. Neale's *Translation.*

Lord Kendal was relieved to discover on Wednesday night that no one proposed to accompany him next morning on his early visit to the Russian church. Mrs. St. John had witnessed the procession of the evening before, when the corpse was taken from the Villa Bermont, and she dreaded the heat of a crowded building. The Newbolds had agreed to go, and to take a friend with them, but not till late in the afternoon; and so he saw himself able to start alone, which he did with a very heavy heart. Yet there were few earthly things he would not that morning have forfeited rather than this his last and only chance of seeing the princess. He was not naturally a sanguine man, and he probably had formed no hopes or expectations from such a meeting; it was only hunger which drove him there—hunger for her face, her voice, and her sweet presence; it was curiosity to know if she was well, or if she had been suffering; it was that longing for completeness, even in things bitter and mournful, which can give a soothing power to many a sad sight, to the disappearing sail, nay, even to those last rites "when the feet of the bearers are heavy and slow;" for to have seen the last is always to be enfeoffed in something. It is something not to have been balked; it is a possession forever.

Lord Kendal was also actuated by self-reproach. He had come to own to himself now that, but for his insane jealousy of the dead Alexis, that letter would

have been, not more courteous—for in that, being the work of an English gentleman, it had certainly not been lacking—but more concerned. It would have preserved more the tone of an old friend, who, innocently guilty as he might be, still had the right, by reason of old friendship, to feel and to express a deep personal loss and regret. Now that it was too late, or all but too late, for reparation in this world, he blamed himself for his jealousy and his pride. Like many more, he found reason to curse that false humility which pretends to sink itself, only that it may more effectually wound another: which denies to the heart, however full and sore, one tender, humane, or reasonable expression of worthy feeling, which, self-deceiving, is content with the bare letter of right doing, and, by missing the large and great spirit of the Right, leaves itself forever utterly, selfishly, and inhumanly, in the wrong.

Self-accused and of just such a temper was Lord Kendal to-day, as he carried his uneasy conscience along with him to the church in the Longchamps.

That man must, however, be a selfish one who does not feel before the spectacle of a nation's sorrow and a father's loss, that his own griefs, whatever be their magnitude, are in a measure dwarfed, if not absolutely for the time being appeased. At least, so Lord Kendal found, when he began to mingle with the curious crowd that poured into the Russian church, during the early hours of the lying in state of the Czarewitch.

The appearance of the building itself was, in some degree, a surprise to him; for, glittering in the light of the myriad tapers with which this "*chapelle ardente*" was filled, rose the *iconostas*, or screen, from which the sacred pictures looked down upon the crowd, their long, lean, brown hands, and their saintly, Byzantine faces looking still more unearthly, and more passionless from the great, stiff, gilt plates that surround them. The golden gates were closed, and across the sanctuary within them the seamless, red silk curtain hung—fit emblem to-day not only of any sacramental mysteries it might hide, but of that red veil of our humanity which hangs ever before the true Holy of Holies, and which hides from mortal senses the secrets and the ineffable beauties of the glory that is to be revealed. By the dead this veil is lifted; to them the great Earth-mother, the inviolate Isis, with her triple secret of life, death, and resurrection, stands revealed. The curtain hangs ever between her and the living.

Round the dome of this church, and in old Slavonic lettering, runs the pathetic legend, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you!" and Lord Kendal realized, as he read it, that if rites vary with clime and custom, grief is one and the same, and that one also is the hope of the human family through the Great and the Silent Consoler.

Those who had come with their first-born to that church for the promised solace there, were among the veriest potentates of the earth, the powers of the great North. Last night, by torchlight, the family of the Czarewitch had brought him thither on foot: father, mother, brothers, sister, "kinsfolk, and acquaintance"—they had come to render him the pathetic observance of the last kiss, and to touch his brow and his hand in an unutterably tender farewell. And then, having declared with their royal lips that before the last Judge all men are equal,* they had wended their way back with flambeaux to his empty rooms.

To-day round his catafalque all the noblest houses in Russia were represented—*boyars*, in whose veins still runs the Warangian blood of Rurik the Northman, were there, soldiers from the Caucasus, and generals of Crimean fame, and, among

* "For I go before the Judge with whom is no respect of persons: for serf and lord stand together before Him; king and warrior, rich and poor, in one estimation."—*Stichera of the Last Kiss, ascribed to St. John Damascene.*—DR. NEALE'S *Translation.*

the great historic names of the day, only one was missing—Nicholas Orloff—who had been carried feet foremost to the graveyard but ten days before.

Then came the authorities and dignitaries of the town, its clergy, the general commanding in the district, and his staff, all the "cast-iron colonels with the cast-iron faces," then the colonel, the officers, and many of the men of the regiment of the Chasseurs-à-pied de la Garde Impériale: and then the crews of three Russian frigates, marines in their ugly uniform, and sailors with fair hair, and high cheek-bones, who had had their flat, sallow faces burned brown by the suns of Villefranche, and of Petite Afrique. There were French sailors also, with their long, falling blue collars and glazed hats; English and Nizzard residents; peasants from the environs, and even from the neighboring hills; and Russian servants in the national dress, whether they were nurses with crimson sarafans, big amber necklaces, and high glittering *Kakoshniks*,* or were Lithuanian girls, with long plaits of fair hair. These all worshipped on their faces with piteous sobs of "*Ach ti Gospódi!*" breaking at times from their breasts, while children looked on, timidly crossing themselves at intervals, and gazing with innocent curiosity at all this pageantry of death. Lastly, there was a crowd of Russian ladies, who, in the pure white dresses of the Easter season, looked like a stream of milk among the dark crowd of soldiers, sailors, and officials, whose breasts blazed with the crosses and stars of half a dozen orders.

The dead Czarewitch was likewise in full uniform, and his orders were displayed on his breast, while above them his hands were crossed in that supreme repose which a national proverb says is only to be secured by death. †

* High, crescent-shaped head-dress worn by Russian peasant-women.

† Two hands crossed on breast;
Labor is done.
Russian Proverb.

The catafalque was a mass of flowers, for Nice the flowery had emptied, so to speak, her lap about the dead man's pillow; and as the tea-roses, the magnolias, the great white iris (the true *fiordilisa*), and the trailing purple Kennedias withered in the glare of the candles, or drooped from the pressure of the crowd, they were constantly renewed. Every few hours fresh baskets of flowers arrived, and every fresh shower of them, as they fell upon the bier, seemed to be more exquisite, more fragrant, more mockingly gorgeous than the last.

The "poet-gardener" of Nice had outdone himself, it was declared, and had even surpassed the flowers which he had sent on a recent evening, when, in their Holy Week, Russia's empress had knelt by the "*Cercueil de Jésus*," and had dropped upon the holy bier roses that looked like molten gold.

Dead among the roses now lay the dead heir of all the Russias, and at the foot of the catafalque were the readers, who, by relieving each other constantly, kept up, through all the hours of day and night, the reading of those Gospel narratives, which the Russian Church has appropriated to the cold ear of royalty in death.*

The heat of the church, the smell of the incense and of the flowers, and the pressure of this great and varied crowd, affected Lord Kendal very painfully after the first half-hour of his stay, and the monotonous modulations of the readers' voices seemed to inflict a positive physical pain, and to aggravate the gnawing neuralgia in the stump of his left arm, which was rampant to-day as it had been ever since the sirocco set in. His impatience, too, increased gradually as his hope of seeing Princess Véra seemed to be dwindling away. It was hardly possible that she could have come and gone before he reached the church, and now

* It is the Psalms which are read beside the dead bodies of all except of the royal family: for them the Gospels are reserved.

mid-day and the mid-day heats were approaching, and it was more than unlikely that during the next four hours she would appear. On the other hand, four hours more of this dismally superb function were not to be thought of: and even had he contemplated for himself four hours more of this stifling atmosphere of mixed flowers, and incense, and candle-smoke (not to speak of a mass of humanity), it would not have been permitted. In the interest of the public a general order "to move on" would be enforced, unless indeed the crowd should happen to diminish considerably during the *siesta* hours of the day. Of that as yet it had showed no signs, though the mid-day bells of Nice were already clanging, making themselves audible above the droning of the readers, and discoursing with their metal tongues of the lapse of time, above the head of one whose lease of time was more than run. Still the crowd came and went, and went and came, pressing up and down the steps which lead up to the church; for every Russian church is raised above the level of the ground, and represents, with its carpeted floor, the "upper room furnished" of the first Paschal supper.

Lord Kendal waited and waited, and finally he gave up all hope, for the sun did seem at last to have begun to frighten away pilgrims from this flowery shrine; and as ten minutes had elapsed since any new-comers had appeared, he gave it up, and was just turning to leave the church, when, above a group of heads at the door, he described the well-known white mustache of Prince Michael Zamiàtine, and behind him the Princess Véra. But what a Véra! Dressed in white from head to foot, and holding over one arm a wreath of the white clematis *montana*, she was not only, if possible, more colorless than was her dress, but she was altered almost beyond recognition. Certainly she was altered beyond immediate recognition of any one who might have seen her face last, tremulous with eagerness, interest, and hope. It looked more deplorable from the whiteness of her crape bonnet, and its contrast with the mass of yellow hair which lay above the forehead, where the large blue veins were painfully distinct. Her eyes were heavy, and yet so deepened were their sockets that they seemed to have grown beyond all measure great, and below their underlids there were large violet stains: her lips looked dry, and, as they were parted, this, along with the strange expression of her eyes, gave her all the appearance of a person who, after a severe shock, has been stricken with some mental infirmity. With vacuous, impersonal look, and with tottering, unsteady gait, he beheld this beautiful girl transformed into an Ophelia.

She followed her father mechanically through the crowd till she reached the foot of the coffin, where she laid her wreath on the ground, and then bowed herself before the dead majesty of Russia, until her forehead also nearly touched the floor. She then raised herself, and with the same stupid, wide-open eyes moved on a step or two, making the sign of the cross as she went.

Lord Kendal fairly groaned, and for a moment he felt dizzy, partly owing to the stifling air, partly to the pang of this sudden apparition of the woman whom he loved, and who now came before him, no longer beautiful and serene, but as a stricken, statue-like creature, who must have gone through something worse than the shadow of death since he had seen her last. And all this through his fault or misfortune! All this was from grief for the dead Alexis, for the fair young soldier, her companion, killed ten years ago at Inkermann, and who had, it seemed, taken her young love along with him to his soldier's grave, and so made, as she had said that day about Princess Dagmar's betrothed, the day dark before it had ever fairly dawned. Véra, the most tender and faithful of northern women, still wept, as he believed, for her Alexis, and looking at to-day's spectacle

through her own old grief, she was ready, so Lord Kendal thought, to weep for her own old loss beside the clay-cold corpse of the Czarewitch.

Some associations really did seem at work in the girl. Lord Kendal could see her as she now approached the side of the bier, and, laying her left hand on it, she stood for a moment, and looked steadily at the corpse. From association then, or from pure pity, a rush of tenderness seemed to come over her, and she dropped on one knee, and, with something like a sob, she bent down ere she kissed him, and gazed with clasped hands at the man who a week ago had been her future sovereign, and who, not so very many months ago, had often given her his royal hand in the dance. The "rapture of repose" spread over the noble Romanof brows, and the bewildering beauty of the bright flowers heaped up about his pillow, both seemed to fascinate her. She gazed and gazed, as if she would fain have had more time to realize what death is, and what may be the height or the depth of that last sleep; then, after she had kissed him, the tears began slowly to course down her cheeks, to which a more living color had, by this time, returned. Yet, though this emotion had had power to wake her out of the semi-vacant trance in which she had at first moved about, the face now, as seen by her lover, was all quivering and tear-bedewed, and was, if possible, a more piteous sight than before—by as much more piteous, had Lord Kendal but known it, as does the anguish of a living sparrow surpass the solemn grief of a greater loss by death.

He did not read its meaning aright; but he had seen enough, far more than enough, for one day, and so he turned and left the church, while the princess was still worshipping, her face toward the golden gates, and her mouth moving in some unguessed-at prayer. Outside, where the sunshine smote down upon him almost like a sword, the fields of Longchamps lay in verdure. In their lanes the young green reed-canes were pushing sharp and strong, and, striking quickly down one of these lanes, he soon reached the shadow and shelter of the streets, and then through the mules, and the dust, and all the traffic of the Rue de France, he made his way out to his sister's house.

Princess Véra, too, went home. She had not seen Lord Kendal in the church, where, perhaps, had she met them, his sympathetic eyes might have revealed to her the truth it so very much imported her to knew: but she did not know it, and, lying down as soon as she got home, she lay, unsleeping and silent, through six comfortless hours. And in her deadly wound, for she was wounded now well-nigh unto death, she turned ever and anon the arrow that had made it: "He does not love me," she said; "he does not love me: and he has never loved me, and I have believed that he did! Oh, the folly of it! the folly, and the pain!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

PONT DES PAS PERDUS.

> I was too proud the truth to show,
> You were too blind the truth to know
> And so we parted long ago.
>
> CLARIBEL.

EVERY day of that sad week in Nice, which brought such a burden of sorrow to Véra Michailovna, had also its appointed interest and ceremonial, and this was unavoidable until the last offices had been rendered to the dead Czarewitch, and that he and his had all vanished from the place, like a dream when the sleeper awakes.

All Friday, till sundown, the body had lain in the church, and at sunset an immense calvacade collected—the Czar and his sons, on horseback, with every official of the town and department, with the bishop, and the clergy of all the

churches, with the court and its retinue, with troops, and with such a concourse of spectators, that these blackened every road, rock, wall, parapet, and window, and every coign of vantage from which the embarkation at Villefranche could be seen.

If grief was expressed in some black dresses, in the reversed yards of the frigates, and in the flags that floated half-mast high, as well as in the booming of the minute-guns that woke a hundred echoes in the rocks, all inanimate Nature looked that evening not only glad but glorious. Round the feet of those red rocks lapped the most pellucid of waves, above their heads was the most unclouded ether, on their sides rested the misty-gray olive-woods; gardens of lemon and orange scented the evening air, and the undergrowth there was a carpet of the brightest dyes, for the weeds of that happy region are as superb as are the garden-flowers of ours. The fields were streaked with red spear-lilies, hedged with roses, and hung with garlands of bindweed, and by every roadside there grew great beds of blue borage, starred with Bethlehem flowers,* or pierced by the lilies of St. Bruno, whose stems looked like rods of silver. Here and there a tall and sky-pointing cypress rose above the caroubas and the maritime pines; and far to the eastward, beyond the promontory of St. Jean, where the tunny-boats lay, and Eza's more exquisite sea, stretched the bold outlines of the hills, and the purple Bordigeria shore. But here, close at hand, and under the walls of the *Darse*, or inner dock, the crowd of human beings was greatest, and there the black barges lay, waiting for their precious freight. Again the guns boomed, and the bells of the little town, just done their ringing to even-song, began to toll, while the band of the flag-ship sent across the waters wailing notes of most melodious pain.

* *Ornithogalum:* called by the peasants "*la dame d'onze heures*," from the time of its opening.

Then the barges pushed off. In the first, o'ercanopied with gold, the royal coffin lay, and before it and behind it were the priests, who still with psalms and prayers escorted it to the frigate. The great hull of the Alexander Nevsky, her black sides, her ninety guns, and her towering top-gallants, which, like those of her sister frigate the Vitias, had been for some months familiar to all eyes, now mirrored themselves for the last time in these waters, for soon with a great streamer of black smoke, waving like a mourning banner behind them, they were standing out between the headlands, and just where, in the brief twilight, the lines of sea and sky seemed melted into one, they took their flight. The pallid, melancholy Bay of Cronstadt awaited them; this, the harbor of the southern sea, saw them no more forever.

Véra two hours later could still, from her window, descry the ships far out on the western horizon; the moon shone already in their wake, and in their sails was the *vent de souleù*, a light but a favoring breeze.

On Saturday the court left for Stuttgart, and then in every Russian house there was a general *sauve qui peut;* every one, nobles as well as officials, more anxious the one than the other to leave the place, and to reach St. Petersburg, so as to assist in due form at the real funeral of the dead *héritier*.

The Zamiàtines were naturally not remiss, and a day had been fixed for their leaving, when a *contre-temps* occurred, in the dangerous illness of Marussia, the old Russian maid.

Prince Michael gallantly offered to wait for three days, so as, if possible, not to oblige Countess Zotoff to travel alone; and it may be believed that this attention on his part was in every way acceptable, and held to be very symptomatic.

It was almost a reprieve to Véra when Julie rushed into her room to announce—upon the courier's authority—

that the journey was delayed for three days. Though all hope was at an end, still she dreaded the hour that was to tear her from the south—the land her mother had loved, the place where she had known so much happiness. For grant it all frail the happiness you have had, no one can take from you—that is your own forever—it is so much saved from the wreck of the past. Then here, at least, "Nature was ambassador for God." * But yonder lay the north, with leaden skies, and wild, wailing winds, as of a soul in pain; there was the formal life, the death in life, which she so much dreaded. Every *verst* that lay between herself and the north had its value now —by so much farther off was her father's marriage, and her own very probable retreat to the Novi Dévitchi Convent.

She resigned herself therefore very philosophically to the inconvenient delay; but not so her maid. Mademoiselle Julie made a personal matter of the occurrence, and of the notice bestowed on the sick woman.

"Sick? I believe it, and what wonder? The antics she has played for the last three weeks would have undermined the constitution of an *anthropophage*. To have lived all the Holy Week on *le pain bénit*, † on a handful of sorrel, and a bottle of oil, is enough to make any one ill. I told her so. 'See me,' I said; 'I eat every day a good soup, and do I find myself the worse for it?' Then the old hypocrite began to talk to me through the nose about my soul! *Bêtise!* My soul, *Dieu merci!* is as well as any soul can be expected to be in such a wicked world. No one can say I do not repeat my rosary at all fitting times, and I give alms. It is true, I do not give my *gros sous* to the new Jesuit church, as the priest politely invites me to do, but I keep my *gros sous* for myself and for the poor; and, I ask you, is not that better than fasting till one is sick, and wasting me two boxes of night-lights into the bargain? Yes, I repeat it, and she may say as she will, but I missed those boxes on the Vigil of the Sunday of the Palm-branches, and I know that she took them, to burn before the holy pictures, forsooth! *Ah, sale tripotage!* (nasty messing!) she is always at it. So between that week, and her tempers about the countess's son that was killed, and her howlings over the *héritier* (God give rest to his good soul!) this illness has come on us. And what a fuss!—'How is she?' all day long. And who asks how I am? I who have to pack for two people, and in this heat of the lizards—or my young mistress either? does she look well? *Bien loin*, very far from it."

Neither, Julie might have added, did Countess Zotoff look well. She was seriously vexed by her maid's illness—a bilious fever, undeniably produced by the very causes which Mademoiselle Julie had so ably described, but not the less troublesome. Then Dr. Prosch's bill for a winter's attendance on herself had to be paid, and, in spite of that worthy person's fair prophecies and fine speeches, his little bill on leave-taking made a sad hole in the widow's purse. In short, the poor lady's temper was tried, and what weighed on her mind most of all was the fact that she was taking Véra back to Russia unaffianced, and plainly out of spirits.

Never, she said to herself, had there been any thing more unlucky than her fancy for that Englishman. Serge Donskoï was certainly dismissed, and not another suitor was in the field, and so convinced was Countess Pascha that Prince Michael would not give his daughter a step-mother as long as she remained unmarried, that, at the end of ten days, it must be said that the countess found it far easier to forgive Lord Kendal the accidental death of her son, than his not

* "Aurora Leigh."

† The *Antidoron*, or *Eulogie* (the *pain bénit* of France)—bread blessed for the small altar on the left hand. It is eaten fasting in memory of the Sacrament, and is said to be efficacious in expelling venial sins. This practice was introduced into the Latin Church under Pius I.

having, long ere this, married Princess Véra.

That young lady lay, as may be supposed, on any thing but a bed of roses, and nothing but the countess's wish to stand well with her father had protected her from many such outbreaks as had greeted her when she had glided on that first day into Aunt Pascha's room. Anxious to make her peace after the fatal discovery, and moved by pity for the childless woman, she had crept up to the side of her bed. Then Prascovia Borisovna had sprung up, and clinched her fist, and, with eyes gleaming like fires, had cried, "How dare you—how did you dare to bring that man into this house? You viper! to love the murderer of my son under his wretched mother's eyes!"

"I did not know it," Véra had sobbed —"I could not know it!—how could I have known it? Would to God that I had known it!" And, covering her face with her hands, she had sunk into a chair.

After that day the subject had not been definitively alluded to between them.

At length Marussia's symptoms abated, and the following day was fixed for their departure from Nice — dusty, deserted Nice, which nobody now regretted but Véra.

She was sitting alone at the window on the last evening of their stay, when Countess Zotoff entered with a broken sun-umbrella in her hand. "Could Julie be prevailed on," she asked, "to go to the shop at the corner of the Pont Neuf, and get her another? Vassilissa was helping poor Marussia to rise. It was now half-past seven; the shop would soon be shut. To-morrow there would not be time to go for a parasol, and the sun would kill her —the sirocco was bad enough already."

Véra rose to call her maid, but returned almost immediately with her little sailor's hat in her hand.

"Julie is out," she said; "but, if you like, Aunt Pascha, I will walk there now, and get a parasol for you. It is not hot now, and people are all at dinner, or already out of town, and I can go alone."

"Do, for the sake of charity!" And Véra, without further delay, tied on her hat, threw a piece of black gauze over her shoulders, and sallied forth to execute her commission.

An eight minutes' walk brought her to the place, and the evening air was pleasant and cool, even on the heated quays.

Having paid for her purchase, Véra was prepared, Nice fashion, to carry it home with her, and parasol in hand she mounted the steps of the bridge. She had but begun to cross it when her heart gave a sudden leap. There, about six yards before her, and on the same side with herself, though coming in a different direction, walked Lord Kendal. She could not pretend not to recognize him, since there was but one one-armed man in Nice; she could not expect not to be recognized, since, whether she knew it or not, there was no other such blonde beauty in the place; and she could not avoid meeting him, for there was no crowd in which they might pass each other unobserved. The hour was late—half-past seven—and the sole occupants of the roadway were three mules, two of whom had long flat oil-barrels fastened to their pack-saddles, and abundance of red and white worsted netting about their ears; on the third mule was a sack, and on the top of the sack was an old woman, and on the top of the old woman was her wide *capeline*. All this Véra saw at a glance, and saw that these offered her no shelter. Behind her were two soldiers carrying their rations in small tin cans; they, too, stepping off the pavement, soon passed her, and there was nothing left but some washerwomen, with gauze-covered baskets of linen, and a half-dozen of *bourgeois*, and *bonnes:* and even these were on the other side. Meantime her former friend was now close to her.

When he saw that they must meet,

Lord Kendal took up his position with great strategical skill. He moved aside as if to let her pass, and then, standing in the gutter, he raised his hat. He had his back to the light. Not so poor Véra. It is true that the parapet had been left to her, and that she could lean her hand on it for support, but the light of the setting sun fell full upon her, flooding her black dress, her throat, her string of pearls, and her golden hair, and showing all the sudden changes of her face from red to ashy pale. She felt blinded, too, by the light, and her limbs trembled; but she was perfectly collected, perfectly gentle, and perfectly still. If she was an accusing angel, she was a silent one. Lord Kendal stammered out that he had believed she had left Nice by this time. She answered in French that they had been delayed by the illness of a servant. This heat was very trying to travel in, but they hoped to move to-morrow. In reply, he said something not very intelligible, about their finding the weather cooler as they got farther north, and Véra, as he said it, paled so, that you might have thought she had suddenly seen an iceberg approaching. Lord Kendal then lifted his hat to her again, when her lips moved as if she was about to speak. He paused, and she suddenly held out her hand, and said, with the sweetest and most heart-felt expression in the world, but still in French, "Croyez-moi, je vous ai beaucoup plaint.* Adieu." She had turned now, had absolutely passed on before he could say any thing in reply but, "Thank you." And there he stood rooted to the spot, staring blankly at the parapet, at the white, dusty torrent-bed beneath, and at the red evening glow on Mont Boron. "God bless you!" at last he exclaimed, "God bless you, my Véra, my darling, and my princess; my beloved!" he continued to himself, as he recalled the sweet, earnest face, the loyal, lovely eyes, the golden glory of her hanging hair, the slender, exquisite figure, the pathetic voice, and the heart-felt, gracious words, so full of thought for others rather than for herself. This girl was wise then to divine that he must have suffered much who had innocently wrought a wrong to her and hers, and she was also brave to speak out her thoughts, while he, part coward and part *crétin*, had stood there stammering and helpless. And a stiff English "Thank you" was all she had got in return.

Certainly theirs had been from first to last a most unlucky chapter of accidents and of misunderstandings; and, as Lord Kendal walked on, he pondered over the whole history, from their first meeting on board the Leghorn boat to this last moment, so full of pain, and yet not without its bitter sweetness; for, if he was certainly an unlucky fellow, who had contrived to do every thing he should not, and to lose the one thing in the world that he most longed for, yet she was left on her fair pinnacle of eminence, a spotless, gentle creature, full of patience and of fidelity—well named *Véra*, for she was always "faithful found."*

The said Véra was, in the mean time, making her way home. All her calmness had given way, and the nerves, breaking loose from their long tension, now refused her control. Her knees shook, she barely felt the ground on which she walked, and so was nearly knocked over on the quay, and when she did get home she was shivering as if with ague. She sat down, and asked faintly for some tea.

"What is the matter?" cried Countess Zotoff.

"It is, perhaps, the sun which has struck me to-day; I am sick, and so cold."

"Cold, child, in this pernicious sirocco! I only wish I had the same complaint. Doctor Prosch assures me that, if this weather lasts, the effects of the journey on me may be most serious. But who is to get you tea at this hour?

* "Believe me, I have pitied you extremely."

* *Véra*, Faith.

Call Vassilissa; she may be to be found. Julie *never* is," continued Countess Pascha, crossly.

Vassilissa, fortunately, was on the premises, and soon set tea before Véra, who swallowed it with difficulty, but hoped, as she did so, that it would stop the chattering of her teeth and the shaking of her hands.

"I quite dread this journey," began the elder lady, after a pause; "and yet I shall be glad to be out of Nice. I am sure I never thought," she continued, plaintively, "that the winter would have ended as it has done."

"Has it disappointed you also?"

"Why, look at my health, child. It is true that Doctor Prosch has done wonders for me; but only look at my health, I say. And your marriage to Prince Serge Donskoï (here Véra made a face of disgust) come to nothing, and the Czarewitch dead. I wonder what either he or we were brought here for?"

"I wonder, indeed!"

"And you are not going to be married. My dear child, you will be an old maid, if you are not a 'Christ's bride' already. I fear now that you will never marry. M. Belloni was telling me only yesterday that you were said to be too *difficile;* and Maxime Petrovitch said the same thing. People complain, he told me, that the blond *princesse* will not listen to any one, and yet that she could listen if she chose."

"M. Gouriéf must have been really amusing for once, if he told you all this: it is a pity I did not hear him. But I fear it is only at second-hand that he says it. He has no invention."

"There you are! you are too satirical, Véra Michailovna."

"I, Prascovia Borisovna?"

"Yes; you are generally called satirical."

"I had no idea of it."

"And more than that, ten times a day, unless I had perfect confidence in myself, I might think that I amused you."

"Not at all, I assure you, Aunt Pascha," replied the princess, shaking her head sadly enough.

"Satire and pride will spoil any woman's market, and yours must offend your father; while to see you single and unsought at twenty-seven years of age is enough to wound the sensibilities of any parent. My husband, the late lamented Dimitri Grigorovitch, used to say: 'Paschette,' he would say, 'women cannot be seen from too near, or heard from too far.' And I would say, 'Dimitri, you have so much wit; but how is that to be managed?' 'Every woman past twenty, Paschette, ought to be maried, or to go into a convent.'"

Here Vassilissa entered, which, for a moment, interrupted the flow of Countess Zotoff's reminiscences. But she resumed almost immediately:

"I am so anxious to see you established, and so little accustomed to think of myself, that rather than see you return to Russia unaffianced, I would even have promoted your marriage with a foreigner."

Véra opened her eyes with amazement.

"I mean that, as you seemed to fancy him, I would even have permitted you to marry that English lord."

"What!" cried Véra.

"Lord Kendal was not unsuitable, it seems, in birth or fortune. You might surely have recalled him. There was no real need, after all, to quarrel with the man. Quarrels are the most vulgar things in the world, my dear; nobody quarrels now but servants; and it is by the way in which well-bred people gloze over unpleasant matters, and all their bad quarters-of-an-hour, that one can distinguish the manner of the *salon* from those of the kitchen—I have always said that. Now, Lord Kendal—"

"Countess Prascovia," said Véra, rising up, "Lord Kendal never asked me to marry him, and in the letter which you saw he gave me no reason, and you

no right, to couple my name with his. He is a foreigner of our acquaintance, an old friend of my mother's, and a man who has had a great misfortune. That misfortune relates in part to my late cousin Alexei Dimitrivitch, and I beg, as a favor to myself, that you will not again give me the annoyance of hearing Lord Kendal's name. He does not obtrude it on me, and I must request that you will not; and," she continued, with one of those smiles which Countess Zotoff thought satirical, "if you consider me as a girl little likely to make conquests, consider me also for this evening as one who has many packages to make. I wish you good-night;" and Véra walked away.

"Just so! I never can hold my own with that child. A more deceitful creature never lived, so quiet, and so horribly perverse, and so fanciful that she is sure to remain on her father's hands. Poor Michael Wassilievitch! I remember him a gay *sabreur*, and very unlike being dry-nurse to a moon-faced girl like this. How handsome he was! and my father's house never was so gay as when he came to it, and he was so liberal that the servants all cried when he went away. To be sure, he always had good allowances. Then, to think of his choosing that tiresome Anna Feodorovna. What he saw in her, goodness knows! she was nothing so very special after all. A pupil of Madame Swetchine's, she called herself! What was Madame Swetchine, after all? —a woman with a dropsy, half *piétiste*, half Frenchwoman—*one of a dozen*,* to my thinking. Well, he must needs marry this pupil of Madame Swetchine, and a great deal of good that did him at court, too. And then I married Dimitri (the kingdom of heaven be his!); but that is no reason, of course, why I should not make it up with an old friend now, especially when my poor dear Aleoshinka is dead, and I have no one to care for me. Only that daughter of Anna Feodorovna's—that grand-pupil of Madame Swetchine, as you may say—is detestable, and Michael Wassilievitch will not marry so long as he has her in the house."

* *Diuzhenna*, one of a dozen, common, valueless.

Countess Prascovia, after this, sat biting her nails. In the object which had induced her to abandon holy Russia, and her mother Moscow, for Nice, she saw herself foiled; and, in her own mind, she declared Princess Véra to be a colossus of ingratitude. She was still a handsome woman, but she could not expect her autumnal beauties to last for ever. Hers was one of those fine sunsets which, if they do not promise much for the serenity of the coming day, have an attraction of their own as long as they last, and to this attraction Prince Michael was by no means insensible, seeing inasmuch as that it had revived a very old flame. And then she had worked all winter on the man in whose house she lived, slowly, patiently, and complacently; while she had appeared to be absorbed in her health, she had not been the less working, turning the current of the flame always on the wire, in the belief that when once red-hot it would bend to her wish: regulating the clock, and then watching the hands, for when they came to the hour what could they do but strike?

Princess Véra was a sad marplot, and it was even doubtful whether she was as sensible of it as she ought to have been.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE JOURNEY NORTHWARD.

Acampestrido e secarouso,
L'immenso Crau, la Crau peirouso. . . .
La Crau antico. . . .
La mudo Crau, la Crau deserto. . . .
Ni d'aubre, ni d'oumbro, ni d'amo.*

Mirèio, Canto VIII

VÉRA, cured by her present indignation of the extreme nervous prostration

* Untilled and arid,
The immense, the stony Crau,
The ancient Crau, . . .
The mute, the desert Crau, . . .
Without tree, or shade, or living soul.

to which her meeting with Lord Kendal had given rise, walked up and down in her own room.

What was to come next? she asked herself. What were people made of? Her father could give up her mother's memory, and now here was Countess Prascovia absolutely ready to sacrifice that of her son to the pursuit of her private plans. "Henry, too," she said, "he drops me without a word. I cannot, cannot bear it all!"—and she sank on the ground near the window. She opened it to let the air in on her beating temples. There was that mute beautiful face of the outside world, apparently the only unaltered thing, now almost painfully still and fair, in its twilight loveliness, and yet, had she been but calm enough to read it, glorious as the dumb countenance of God, and telling of His abiding faithfulness.

She stretched out her hands as one who at once mourns and pleads. Helpless and alone, she looked round the room. Every thing had been packed except the picture, and the book that always lay beside her bed. This picture, the one with which her mother had been blessed when she married, was one of Véra's chief treasures, and, from out of its stiff gold plates, the mild face of the Christ seemed now to look tenderly and yet reprovingly on her despairing passion. In the book—"The Imitation"—were also words of power to soothe her. She undressed, lay down, and, taking up the volume, opened it "by chance;" but, as chance would have it, at these verses:

"O righteous Father, and ever to be praised, the hour is come that Thy servant is to be proved. . . But if thou have recourse unto the Everliving and Abiding Truth, the desertion or death of a friend will not grieve thee. . . . Without Me friendship hath no strength, no continuance. . . For I am the Judge and Discerner of all secrets: I well understand how the matter passed. I know who did the wrong, and who suffered it. From Me proceeded that word—by My permission this hath happened. . . Wait, wait, I say, for Me, and I will come, and take care of thee. . . Trust in Me, and put thy confidence in My mercy."

Yes! the whole world of her love and beliefs might crumble away, but *this* remained true: and, with such words, she stilled her throbbing pulses, composing herself, if not to sleep, at least to calmness.

The journey of the next day would have been a trying one to persons in the best of health and circumstances, for the heat was intense, and the only moment of relief that the travellers obtained was when, leaving Cannes with its beach and its villas behind, the train plunged into the purple gorges of the Esterelles. But hot as had been the morning, it was nothing to what the temperature became in the afternoon under the white cliffs of Toulon.

Véra was very wretched. All the pathos and excitement of yesterday had faded, and to them had succeeded a desolation of weariness, and a weariness of desolation, that made her wellnigh "aweary o' the sun." Her frame of mind toward Lord Kendal was now that of displeasure. She saw that he must have trifled with her; and what she now felt was less anger than a grave, settled condemnation of him. Better love, better regret, better yearnings, hopes, and fears, than this terrible phase of feeling—about which you have the further pain of knowing that it must be the lasting one, because it is founded on the hateful, undeniable truth that your friend, his truth, his promises, his motives, and his actions, are, one and all, worthless. Oh, this Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin of the affections! "Any thing but *this!*" we cry—resenting it as the edges of a wound resent the cautery that will make it ultimately heal.

Under this sombre and leaden atmosphere of soul poor Véra remained all day, until, as the sun kept beating on the car-

riage, her head grew as heavy as was her heart—so much so, that when they all got out at Marseilles, she was so weak and confused as nearly to fall.

Unable to sit up or eat, she was put to bed, where she slept little, or not at all; and by morning she had so much fever that a doctor was called in, and Prince Michael's northward journey had to be again unavoidably delayed.

Her own physician, when summoned from Nice, looked very grave, and said that hers was a severe nervous crisis, with cataleptic symptoms, and recommended great quiet. Aunt Pascha he kept out of the sick-room, and that lady, while complaining heavily of the sirocco, took evening drives to Notre Dame de la Garde, and to other places of note in the neighborhood, in society of her elderly admirer.

By the end of the seventh day there was some amendment, and it was thought that the princess might move without risk.

Her doctor came to her early next morning, and told her that, in his opinion, they would do well to take the evening train, and to go as far as Avignon at once.

"Travel only after the sun has lost its power," he said. "I think it would be well to avoid Paris altogether, and when you get as far as Berne, the air of the mountains will revive you."

Véra murmured some reply, and then turned away her face to hide the tears of weakness that were now running down it.

"*Figlia mia*," said the kind physician abruptly, as he drew his chair opposite her, and laid his hand on her thin arm, "I hope that you do not expect to die; because you are not dying, or even going to die. Your nerves have had a severe shock. Yes, yes, *poverina*, it has been a hard trial. Well, the nerves, as I say, are shaken; but you are young, and your life is strong. I can tell you what will happen if you give in. You will lose the use of your limbs and your beauty, and you will live to the usual term of life, when, drenched with drugs and tears, you will die (and very little to be regretted) of some *angine*, or other common ailment. Now, listen to me. Gather up your courage, and live well—as live you must, and live you will; and this evening, when I come to put you into the train, have a smile for your old doctor, or else he will think you hate him for having played the pastor as well as the physician."

A *coupé* had been engaged by Prince Michael, and at 6.30 P. M. Véra, with a sweet smile on her wan face, was accordingly handed into it. They were hooked on to the train that came in from Toulon, and soon, passing beyond the suburbs of Marseilles, the travellers found their faces really turned toward the north. The evening air blowing from the salt lagoons and lakes, which there run so far inland, soon roused the princess, who, to pass away the time of remaining daylight, began to amuse herself with turning over the pages of Mireïo. It is a Provençal book, about the Provençal country, about these very salt-lakes, about the mulberry-farms, the pines, the rocks, the lavender, the cistus, the solitudes, and the flamingo flights of the plain of Crau, on which our travellers entered just as the moon rose.

Seen at night, this wide and stony plain seemed to Véra motionless as her own northern snows, and not less illimitably vast. Véra closed her book just where Mireïo, in her lovelorn flight across the Crau, gets the sunstroke of which she dies in Vincent's arms.

"Happy Mireïo!" she thought; "and happy death! Yes, the doctor might say what he would, but those who die young, and beloved, are happy, and death is sweet. Better, nay best, would it be to go away, and be at rest, to have for home the plains of heaven, and for company the choir of angels, and the 'three shining Maries,' whom Mireïo in her delirium saw. It would be sweet to feel earth fading,

heaven nearing, and her own mother's arms opening to receive her. There would be her twin Simonÿ, grown tall and fair: and Alexis all radiant; and her Henry too, blameless among the blameless ones. 'O, God! how beautiful are Thy tabernacles!'" and Véra repeated over to herself this song of her Church militant, and then lay back, dreaming with half-closed eyes, while the train sped on, until she fancied heaven near—all impressions grew faint, bodily weakness she felt no more, but in the soft summer moonlight she was lapped in a dreamless rest.

The volume had by this time slipped from her knee, for Princess Véra was asleep.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT LAST.

The seeker finds now, the parched lips are led
To sweet full streams, the hungry heart is fed;
And song springs up from moan of sorrow dead.

Draw nigh, draw nigh, and tell me all thy tale.
W. Morris.

Crash!——She was awakened by a crash, a loud report, and a violent shake; the carriage first vibrated wildly, and then swung over, till with a roll, and another crash, it settled on its side on the ground.

Véra heard the first report, and one piercing shriek from Countess Zotoff, and then, becoming insensible, she saw or felt nothing more.

Slowly only was order restored after the first horrible disorder of that accident. Something, Prince Michael was told, had burst or broken about the engine: the train had been brought up with a terrible jerk, the engine had bedded itself in the ground, a tender and one carriage were on top of it, something then took fire, steam escaped, and the last carriage of the train, that in which the Zamiàtines were, becoming uncoupled by the shock, had turned on its side, and then rolled down the embankment. The earthwork was not, at that spot, above two, or at the most three, feet in height, but such as the overturn had been, it made it a matter of no little difficulty for Prince Michael, once he was himself free, to extricate his unconscious daughter, and the highly-conscious and shrieking Countess Prascovia. Of these ladies, the first, though senseless, was to all appearance uninjured, but the elder had hurt her left wrist. Some small bone was probably broken, and she was now crying piteously as she stood below the embankment where Véra, lying on the earth, gave no signs of life.

Prince Michael, distracted between noise and fear, while endeavoring with a pocket-handkerchief and an ivory paper-knife to tie up the suffering hand and arm, cast round him helpless glances, now at his daughter, and now at the crowd.

But the by-standers were all as busy, as terrified, and as helpless, as were the Zamiàtines.

The engine-driver had been tossed off and stunned, the stoker was badly hurt, half a dozen passengers in the first carriage severely scalded or burnt; wounded people were being carried about, and water called for, and called for in vain, while a fire of hastily-collected weeds and other materials was lighted to throw some additional light on the confused scene. The moon was sailing high, for it was now about half-past nine, and her radiance shone on this great solitary plain, in the middle of which about eighty persons, all helpless and bewildered, were trying to discover the extent of their misfortune or danger, and also their chances of succor. The guard, who was himself badly hurt, said that they were about three and a half miles short of Entressen, the third and last station on the Crau.

Prince Michael learned this with great distress. His scared and screaming companion was sufficiently aware of their plight to be as much frightened as she was hurt: the two Russian maids were

useless, and calling on their saints, while Julie and M. Anelli, the courier, were engaged in a vociferous squabble about some of their properties, which M. Anelli justly feared might be seized on by common consent to keep up the fire near the broken engine, and the more seriously damaged of the passengers. Just as Prince Michael's distress was at its climax, a well-known voice said, "Can I be of any use?" and a well-known figure, that of the one-armed Earl of Kendal, appeared at his side.

"I should be grateful indeed to any one who would take my daughter out of sight and sound; for every time that she comes to herself, and opens her eyes, and sees the blazing train, and hears the cries of the wounded, she goes off in a fresh swoon."

By what eloquence of tongue, or of purse, I know not, but Lord Kendal succeeded in two minutes in getting some one to lift up the unhappy girl, and to carry her for a couple of hundred yards to the rear of the train, to where, on that bare and sandy plain, there were a few rather large stones, and where, in their shelter, a few lavender and wormwood bushes grew. Under such slight cover as these might offer they laid Véra down, out of sight, at least, of the wounded, and Lord Kendal only breathed freely when she was left alone in his care, so bitterly had he envied the two-armed passenger who had had the power to carry her to this place of safety.

The moonlight was bright enough to show her deadly pallor, her wasted hands, her colorless lips. Surely she must have been ill, he said to himself, and delayed by the way, possibly at Marseilles, while he, coming that day from Toulon, had fancied them to be already half-way to St. Petersburg.

He bent over her, and held his breath to listen for hers. Alas! there was none. He laid his head on her breast, but no heart-beat met his ear; only his own heart leaped madly as he touched, for the first time, this exquisite frame, and his hand trembled as he tried to unfasten the ribbon and the collar at her neck. Within them lay the big string of pearls on an apparently pulseless throat.

"Véra!" he called, hoarsely, "Véra!" and, in his great despair, kissed the hem of her dress, her hair, her forehead, and her cold hands. "Véra!" but she neither spoke nor stirred.

Lifting her head tenderly with his hand, he tried to prop it with her hat, worrying himself at his one-handed awkwardness, when he only succeeded in unrolling more of her hair, and in turning her profile a little, so that now the still and white face lay under the moonlight, straight and white, like the dead. Was she dead? Had it been ordered that he who had seen Alexis die, should also see Véra lie dead at his feet?

"Véra! for pity's sake, my child! my darling! live. Véra, my beloved, live! or, O my Maker! let me also die! Véra!" But even to this appeal there was no response, only the confused hubbub from the train, a tinkling sheep-bell near, and a small cloud as it drifted across the moon, threw its shadow on the plain.

"Water!" he cried, "water! a fortune for a cup of water!" for with water she would surely revive. But where is water to be met with on the Crau, unless indeed in its mirages? It was hopeless.

At last he dared to put his mouth to hers, and to breathe into her nostrils, while he strained her to his heart. At length, O triumph! he heard something like a sigh, and saw a quiver in her eyelids. Then he rose. For, when she should first open her eyes, they must not light on him; in her sight he was a guilty man, and perhaps, if he were suddenly to appear before her, she might again drop off into that borderland of unconsciousness, from

which his breath had only just recalled her.

He retreated then behind her, and the little more than knee-deep wild herbs which screened her. From thence he could watch unseen.

After stretching out her arms and opening her eyes, Véra came to herself enough to raise herself partially, and to lean on one hand. She looked around her, and drew a long breath. For a second she remained so, silent and half-reclining; then, resuming probably the train of thought which she had been following when she fell asleep, she looked down wonderingly at herself. Wrapping closely round her limbs, and fastened to her shoulders, hung her long white dust-cloak, and below it her black dress covered her feet. She fancied that the first of these was her winding-sheet — that she had died — so bewildered still was her mind—and then that in some unexplored, strange country beyond the grave, she had wakened thus prematurely and alone.

"Alone!" she said; "after living and dying alone, how hard it is to be alone still!"

Sitting more upright, she again gazed around her, and what she saw confirmed her more and more in her hallucination. This vast level plain, with neither man, nor tree, nor boundary, was surely in another world; this pale white light, flooding all, was the dawn of heaven's great morning; and these few scant stones, which with the still scanter shrubs dotted the expanse of sand, seemed to her the gravestones of the dead, now all sealed and silent, and casting their shadows before them, but soon to be opened and rent. By what miserable chance had she awakened alone, anticipating with this cruel haste the resurrection of the blessed? Where were own dead? "*Maman!*" she called plaintively, and held out a beseeching hand. "*Venez donc* (come then), Simony! Alexei, do not leave me alone. *Henri!* at least you will come to me, for I have loved you so much and so well—*Henri!*"

Hearing his spirit so adjured, the living Henry St. John moved to her side, and called her by name, while the moon threw his unmistakable shadow before her. Then suddenly, and like one who by calling has really invoked a spirit, she flung up her arms above her head with a loud, sharp cry, and sprang to her feet. Tottering she first fell sobbing on his shoulder, then slipped down to the ground, and there buried her face in her hands.

"What has happened?" she gasped, now for the first time fully awake to reality.

"An accident, but you are safe, and with me; and you love me, and have called for me, my heart's darling, my own!"

"You love me, Henry? you love me?"

"Since I first saw you, Véra, I have loved you, and none but you; I could love, and I can love, none but you."

"Say it again," she whispered.

He said it again and again, putting his lips to her hair as her head rested above his heart. She was sobbing.

"Why do you weep, my child, my only one?"

"Because I am so happy," and then first she looked him in the face, and he dried away all her tears.

"Have you no fears?" he asked, after a pause, in which no words seemed to have been needed; "are you not afraid to marry a man twenty years older than yourself—to live in England, a grave country, far from your kindred and faith?"

To this, for sole response, Véra vouchsafed a smile—a smile that overflowed her mouth, as you have seen water overflow the fountain's brim.

"And can you marry a maimed man, one who can never protect you well in danger, or nurse you in sickness?"

Lord Kendal evidently still thought

regretfully of not having been able to carry her, and he waited for her reply. None came.

"What," he thought, "once refused for being a poor man or a foreigner, and once again for being old, must I be rejected now as being maimed?"

Suddenly one little hand stole out from under her cloak, and rested on his empty sleeve.

"Could not, might not I do instead?" she asked, and he caught her to his heart.

Then in a lower whisper he said, "Can you marry the man who killed Alexis?" and he feared to see her grow paler, or flinch before she answered that question.

She shook back the strands of her hair, and stood up pale, but firm, as she put her hand on his.

"Henry," she said, "we know that it was an accident—to be forgiven, as Alexis himself forgave it, and as God has pardoned it. Try to understand me, as I have tried to understand myself. He was my cousin; we had played together as boy and girl, and we liked each other dearly. It is possible that he loved me. I know that he believed that he did. He was good, brave, and tender, you know how much so; and had he lived to return, I make no doubt but that we should have married, and that I should have loved him well. As it was, I was a child—barely sixteen—in love with the war, the banners, with the Metropolitan, with Holy Russia, with the pictures, with all; but I was, as far as by looking back I can judge now—I was not in love with him. If I was, it was unknown to myself; and at least it was not—"

"What was it not, Véra?"

"It was not this."

THE END.

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